

MARVEL

X-MEN



X-CUTIONER'S SONG

Andy Kubert
+
PENNINGTON

HEAR THE CRY OF THE X-CUTIONER'S SONG!

A single shot, and the X-Men's lives are changed forever. At a free concert in Central Park, Professor X calls for peaceful coexistence between humans and mutants and is answered by a gunshot. And behind the trigger stands none other than Cable! Meanwhile, Cyclops and Jean Grey are kidnapped — and the X-Men, X-Factor and X-Force go to war...with each other! Witness epic battles around the globe and on the moon as Mr. Sinister's subtle plan of vengeance on Apocalypse unfolds, and major revelations come to light regarding the true identities of Cable and his twisted doppelgänger, Stryfe! Featuring blood, angst, sacrifice and great big guns as Marvel's mutant families dance to the villains' twisted tune!



Collecting
Uncanny X-Men #294-297,
X-Factor (1986) #84-86,
X-Men (1991) #14-16,
X-Force (1991) #16-18 and
Stryfe's Strike File — written by
Scott Lobdell, Peter David
and Fabian Nicieza; and
illustrated by Brandon Peterson,
Jae Lee, Andy Kubert and
Greg Capullo.

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MARVEL[®]
COMICS



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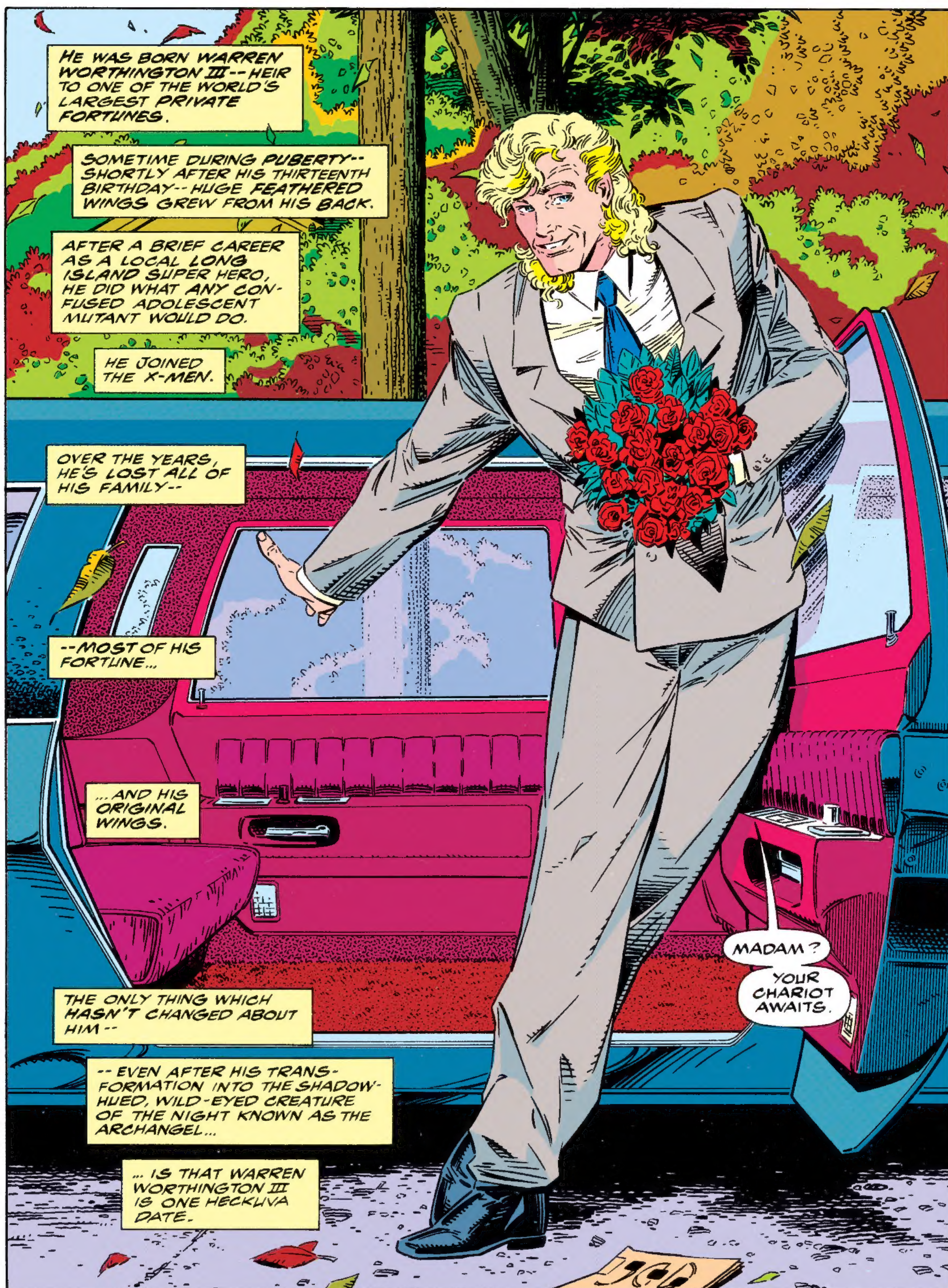
X-CUTIONER'S SONG

PART 1

THE UNCAN

X-MEN





HE WAS BORN WARREN WORTHINGTON III-- HEIR TO ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST PRIVATE FORTUNES.

SOMETIME DURING PUBERTY-- SHORTLY AFTER HIS THIRTEENTH BIRTHDAY-- HUGE FEATHERED WINGS GREW FROM HIS BACK.

AFTER A BRIEF CAREER AS A LOCAL LONG ISLAND SUPER HERO, HE DID WHAT ANY CONFUSED ADOLESCENT MUTANT WOULD DO.

HE JOINED THE X-MEN.

OVER THE YEARS, HE'S LOST ALL OF HIS FAMILY--

--MOST OF HIS FORTUNE...

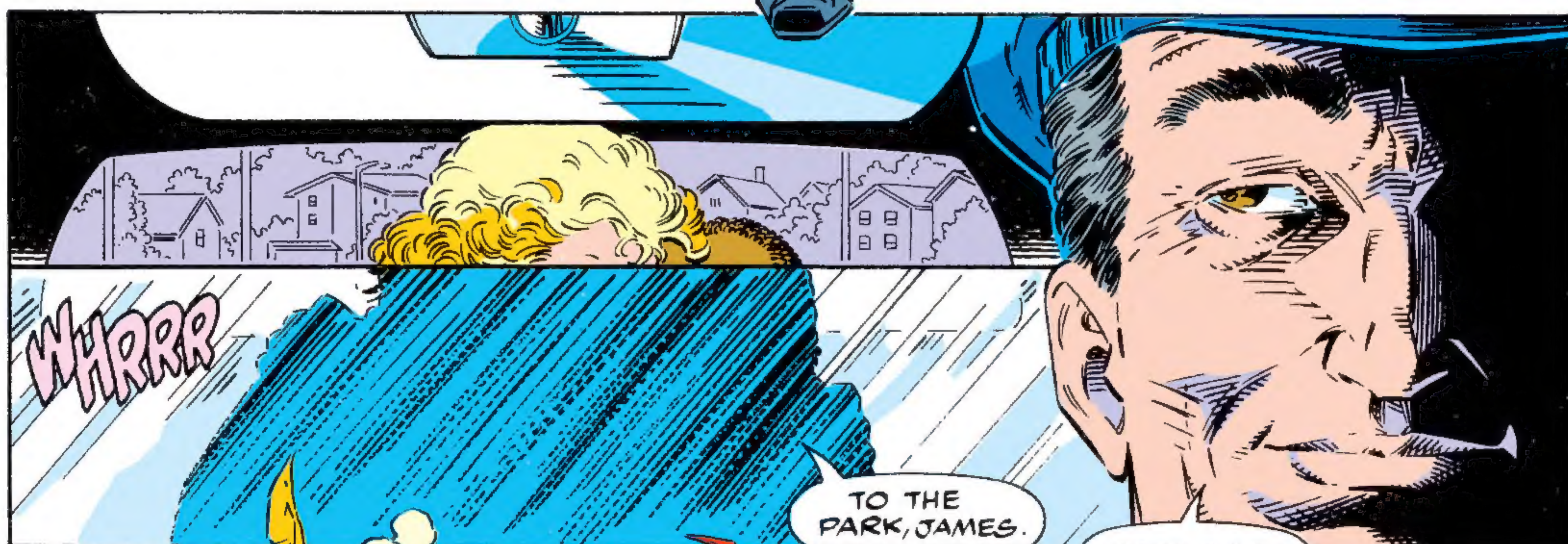
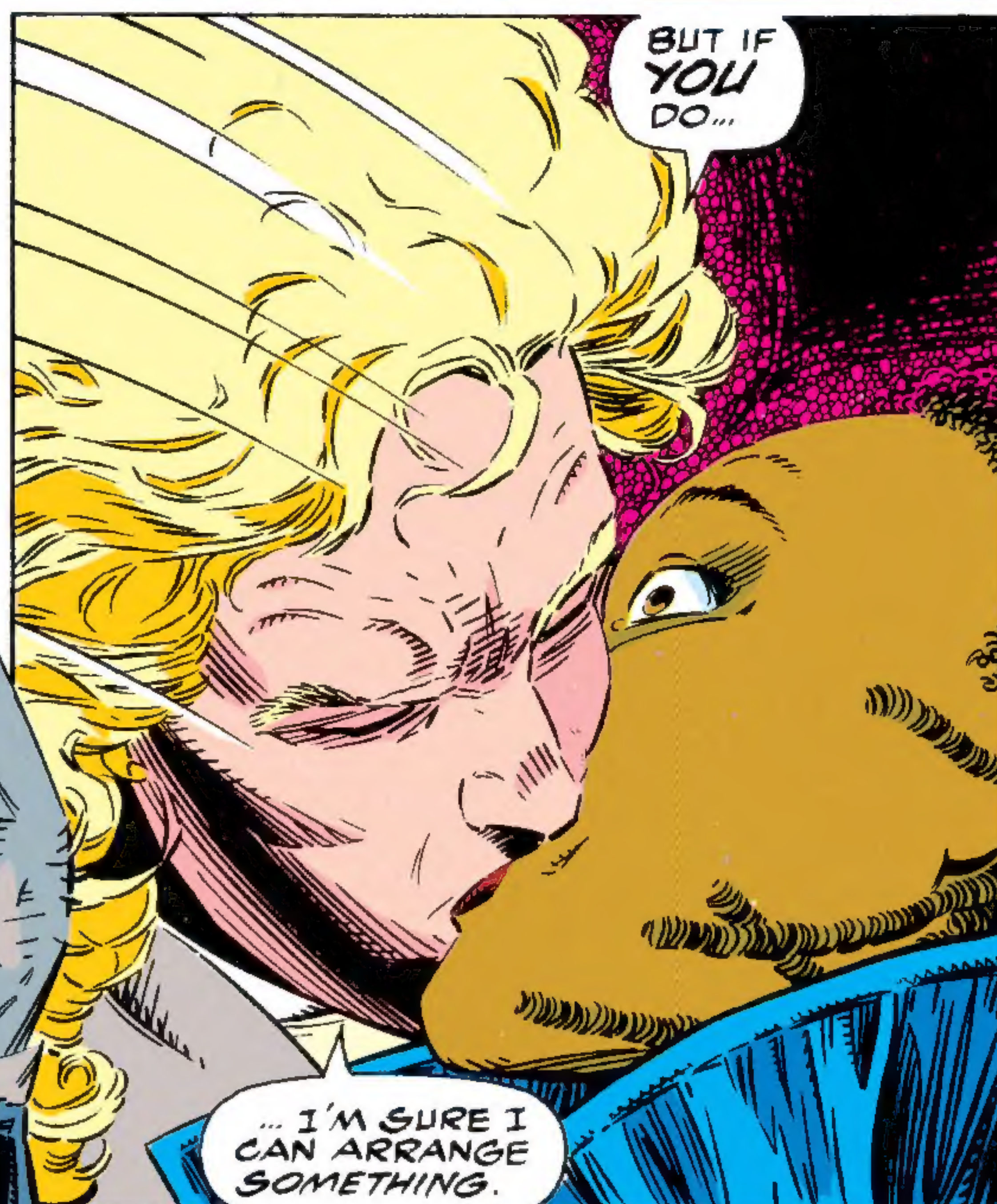
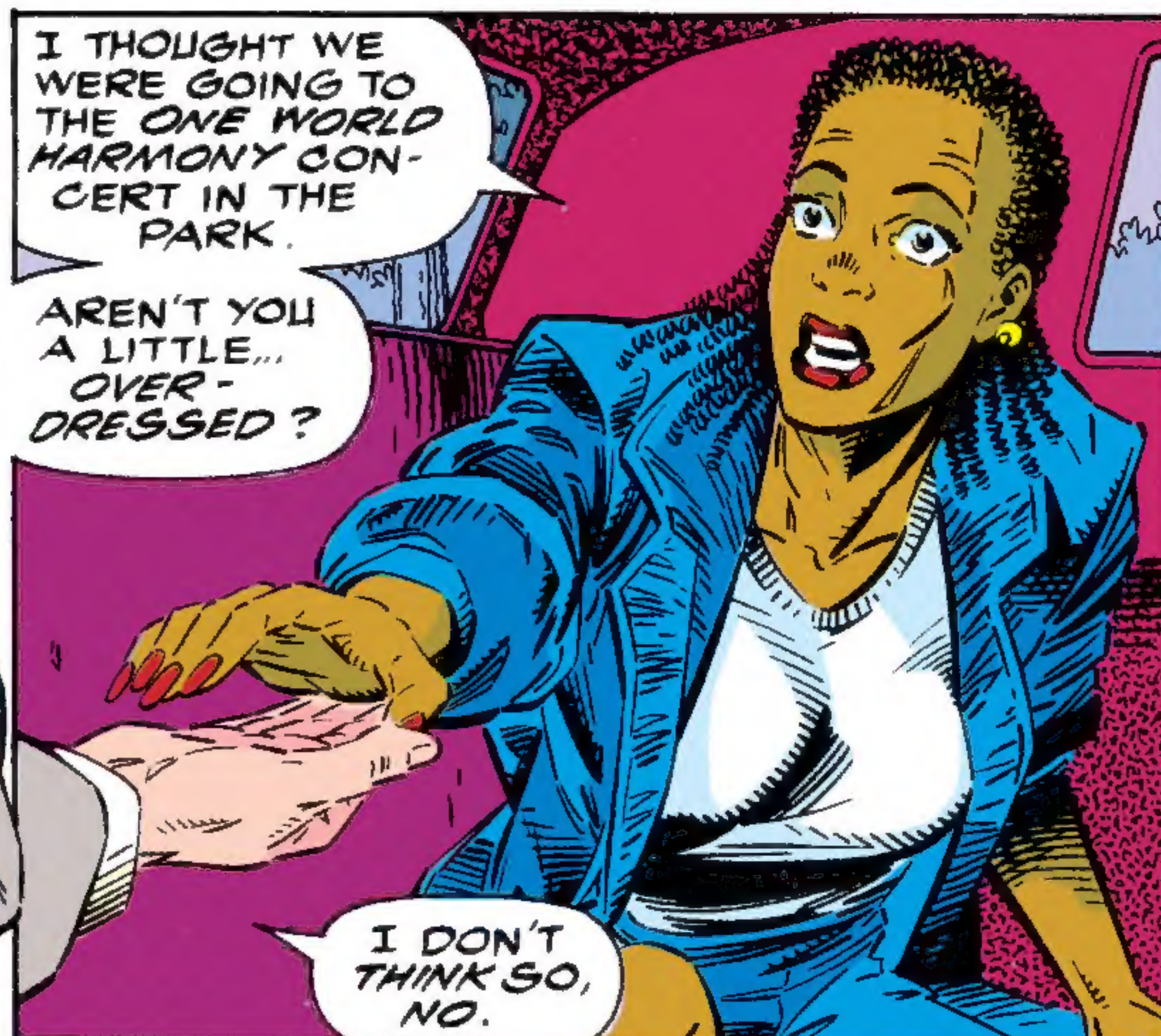
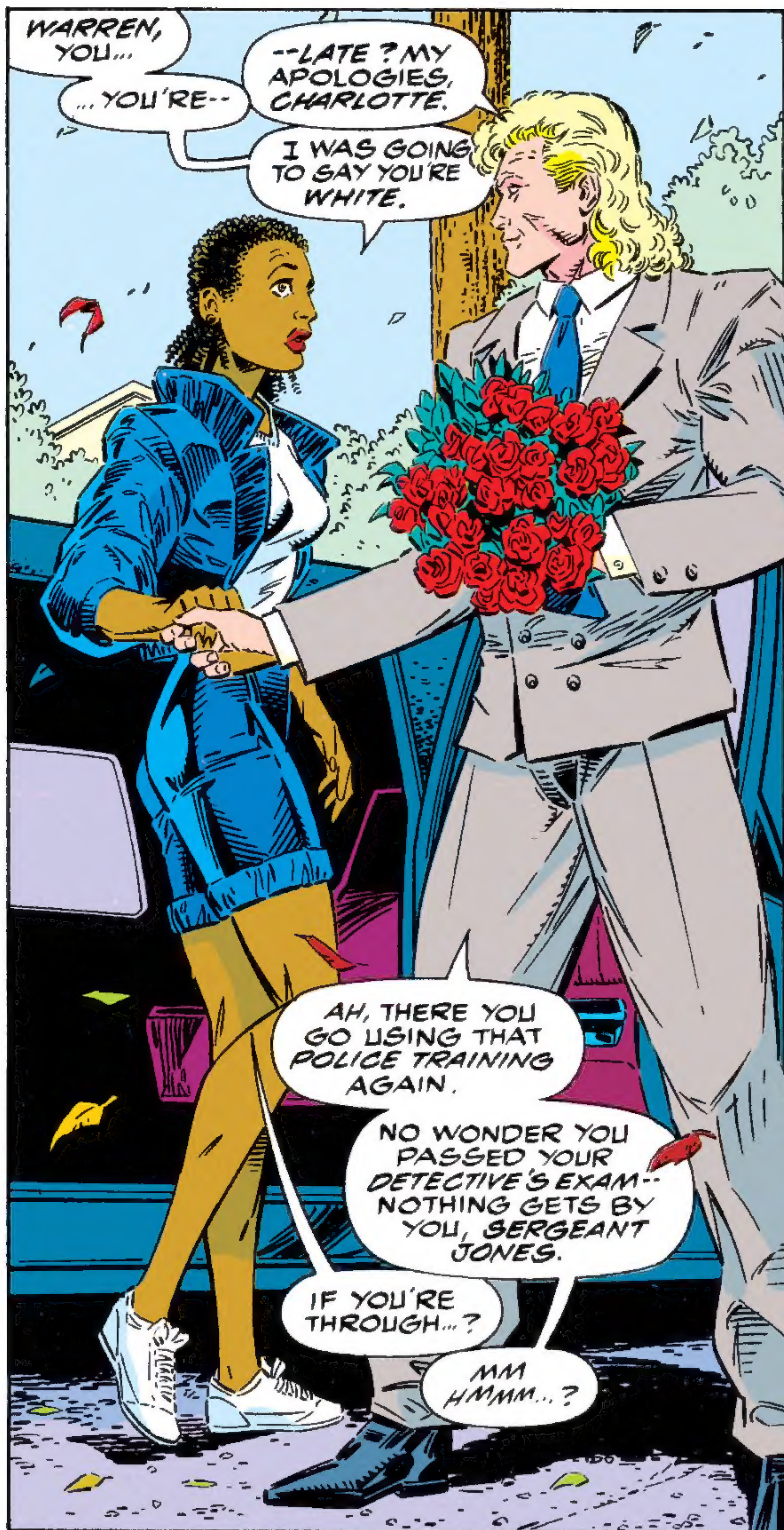
...AND HIS ORIGINAL WINGS.

THE ONLY THING WHICH HASN'T CHANGED ABOUT HIM --

-- EVEN AFTER HIS TRANSFORMATION INTO THE SHADOW-HUED, WILD-EYED CREATURE OF THE NIGHT KNOWN AS THE ARCHANGEL...

... IS THAT WARREN WORTHINGTON III IS ONE HECKLVA DATE.

MADAM ?
YOUR CHARIOT AWAITS.



CENTRAL PARK,
NEW YORK CITY...

THIS
SCENARIO IS
UNACCEP-
TABLE.

THERE MUST BE
SEVENTY-FIVE
THOUSAND PEOPLE
HERE!

THAT'S NOT WHAT
I'M COMPLAINING
ABOUT, ROGUE--
AND YOU KNOW IT!

HOW ARE WE
SUPPOSED TO
MAINTAIN ANY
SECURITY PARAM-
ETER AROUND
THE PROFESSOR
UNDER THESE
CONDITIONS?

WHAT'S WRONG,
SHUGAH-- THEY
DON'T HOLD FREE
ROCK CONCERTS
IN THE FUTURE?

WHY DO I GET
THE IMPRESSION
YOU'RE STILL ANGRY
ABOUT THAT BLUE-
BERRY PIE INCIDENT?*

PLEASE. I'M
ABOVE THAT
SORT O' THING.

I DON'T
EVEN KNOW
WHAT YA'
GOING ON
ABOUT.

*SIDES, IT WAS
BOYSENBERRY.

* X-MEN #8 -- Bob

BELIEVE IT OR NOT,
BISHOP, THE X-MEN
MANAGED TO
FUNCTION AS THE
MUTANT TEAM
SUPREME--

--LONG BEFORE YA
STUMBLED INT' CAMP
XAVIER T'TELL US
PEONS HOW IT'S
DONE.

I'M UP NEXT,
CHARLES.

ARE YOU SURE
THE MASSES ARE
READY FOR
THIS?

READY TO LISTEN
TO THE CALL FOR
BROTHERHOOD, FOR
PEACEFUL COEXIS-
TENCE BETWEEN
HUMANS AND
MUTANTS?

BUT IF MANKIND
WAITED FOR THE
"RIGHT TIME" TO
ADDRESS THE
WINDS OF CHANGE--

NOT AT
ALL, LILA.

--IT'S UNLIKELY
WE'D EVER HAVE
CRAWLED FROM
THE PRIMORDIAL
OOZE.

TWENTY YARDS
BELOW THE
STAGE...

--THEY'LL BE RAKING
CHARLES XAVIER'S MUTANT-
LOVING BONES OFF THE
GREAT LAWN FOR A MONTH!

NOT TO MENTION
THOSE OF LILA
CHENEY'S MAKE-
UP WOMAN--

--WHO TIPPED
US OFF TO THE
PROFESSOR'S
UNSCHEDULED
APPEARANCE.

EVERY CAUSE
HAS TO HAVE
ITS MARTYRS,
ANITA.

WE'LL MOURN
HER AT NEXT
WEEK'S
MEETING!

SORRY,
"FRIENDS!"

BRRZT

BRRZT

I'VE GOT
FIRST DIBS
ON PROFESSOR
X.

IF IT MEANS
ANYTHING, I
MAY TAKE A
LITTLE
LONGER--

--BUT HE'LL
BE JUST AS
DEAD.

STAN LEE PRESENTS THE UNCANNY
X-MEN IN

OVERTURE

BEING THE FIRST PART OF THE X-CUTIONER'S SONG

SCOTT LOBDELL - WRITER
BRANDON PETERSON - PENCILER
TERRY AUSTIN - INKER
CHRIS ELIOPOULOS - LETTERER
MIKE THOMAS - COLORIST
BOB HARRAS - EDITOR
TOM DEFALCO - EDITOR IN CHIEF

SALEM
CENTER,
WEST-
CHESTER.

TO THE TOWNIES
IT'S KNOWN AS
HARRY'S HIDE-
AWAY.

THE STUDENTS OF
CHARLES XAVIER'S
SCHOOL FOR GIFTED
YOUNGSTERS, HOW-
EVER HAVE DUBBED
IT...

...THE DANGER
PUB.

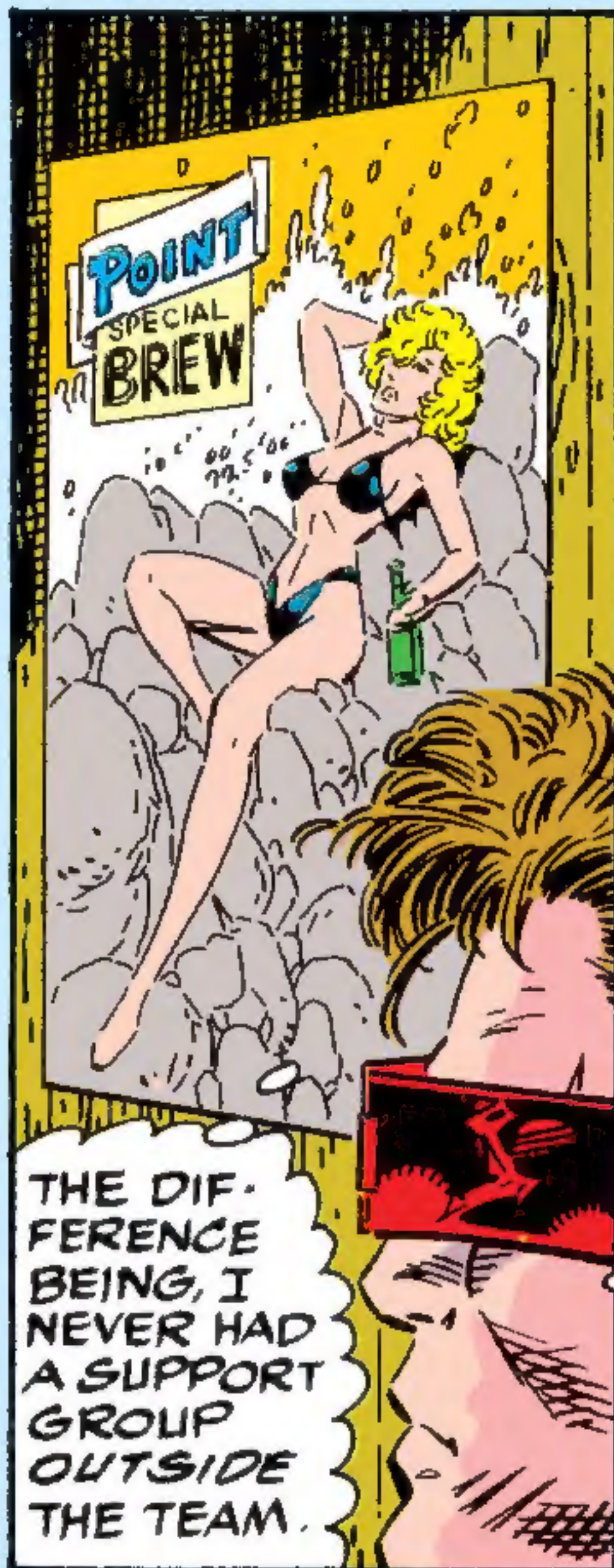
JUST HOPE I'M MAKING
THE RIGHT DECISION.
LOGAN ASSURES ME
THAT WITH MARIKO'S
DEATH--*

--THE LAST THING
HE NEEDS IS A
FORCED LEAVE OF
ABSENCE FROM
THE X-MEN.

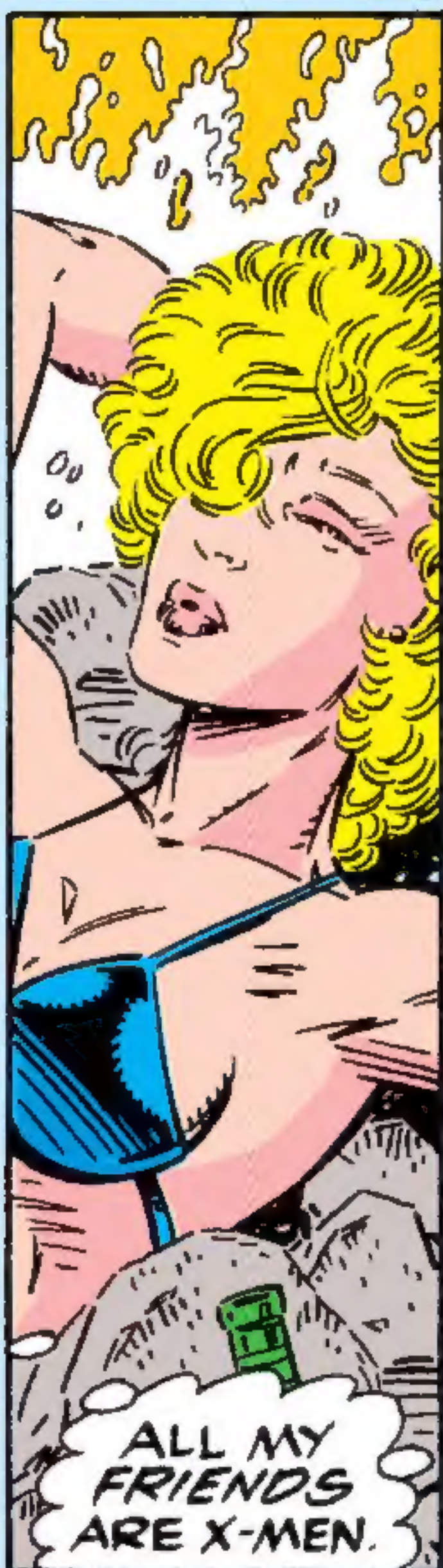
I CAN
SYMPATHIZE
WITH HIM.

I REMEMBER
HOW DEVASTATED
I WAS WHEN I
THOUGHT I'D
LOST JEAN.

* WOLVERINE #57--B.H.



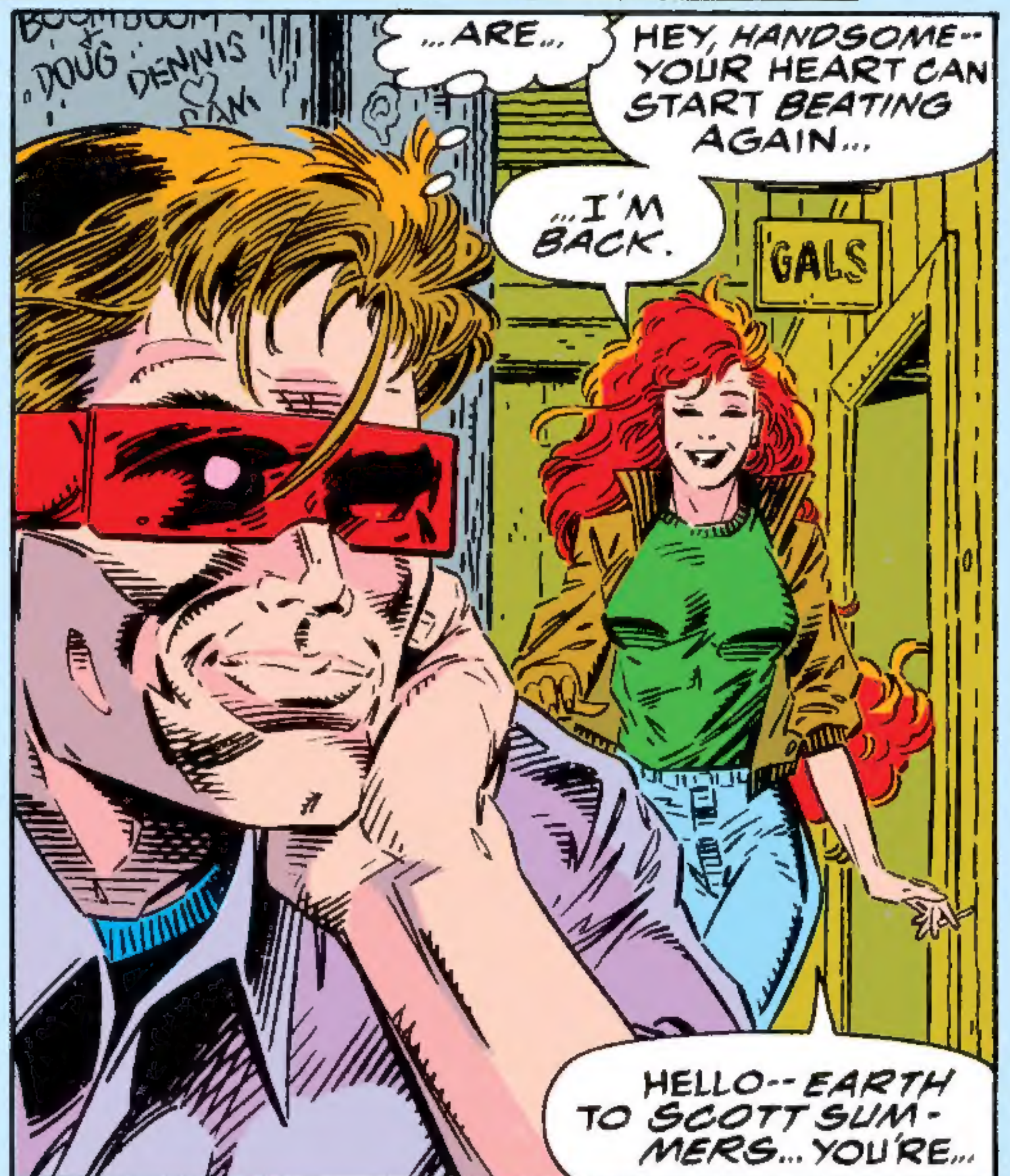
THE DIF-
FERENCE
BEING, I
NEVER HAD
A SUPPORT
GROUP
OUTSIDE
THE TEAM.



ALL MY
FRIENDS
ARE X-MEN.



ALL MY...
LOVES
ARE...



...I'M
BACK.

HELLO--EARTH
TO SCOTT SUM-
MERS... YOU'RE...

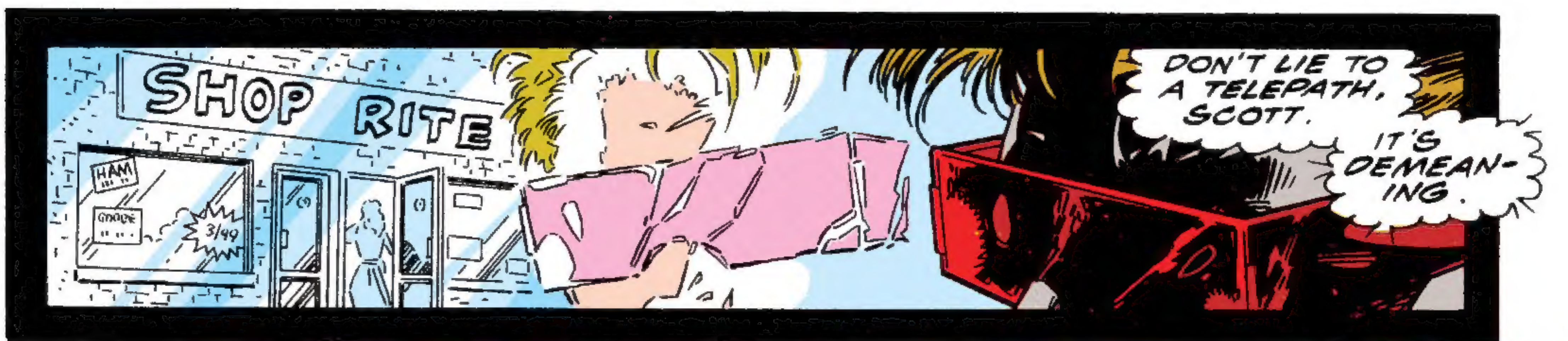
YOU'RE...

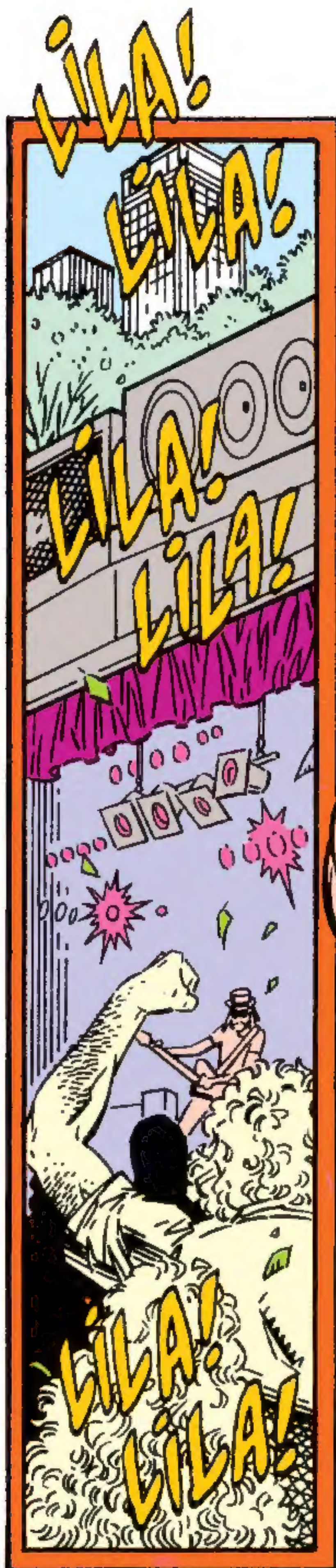
YOU'RE
THINKING
ABOUT
HER...
AGAIN?!

"HER"?

I'M THINKING
OF YOU, JEAN.

I'M ALWAYS
THINKING OF
YOU.

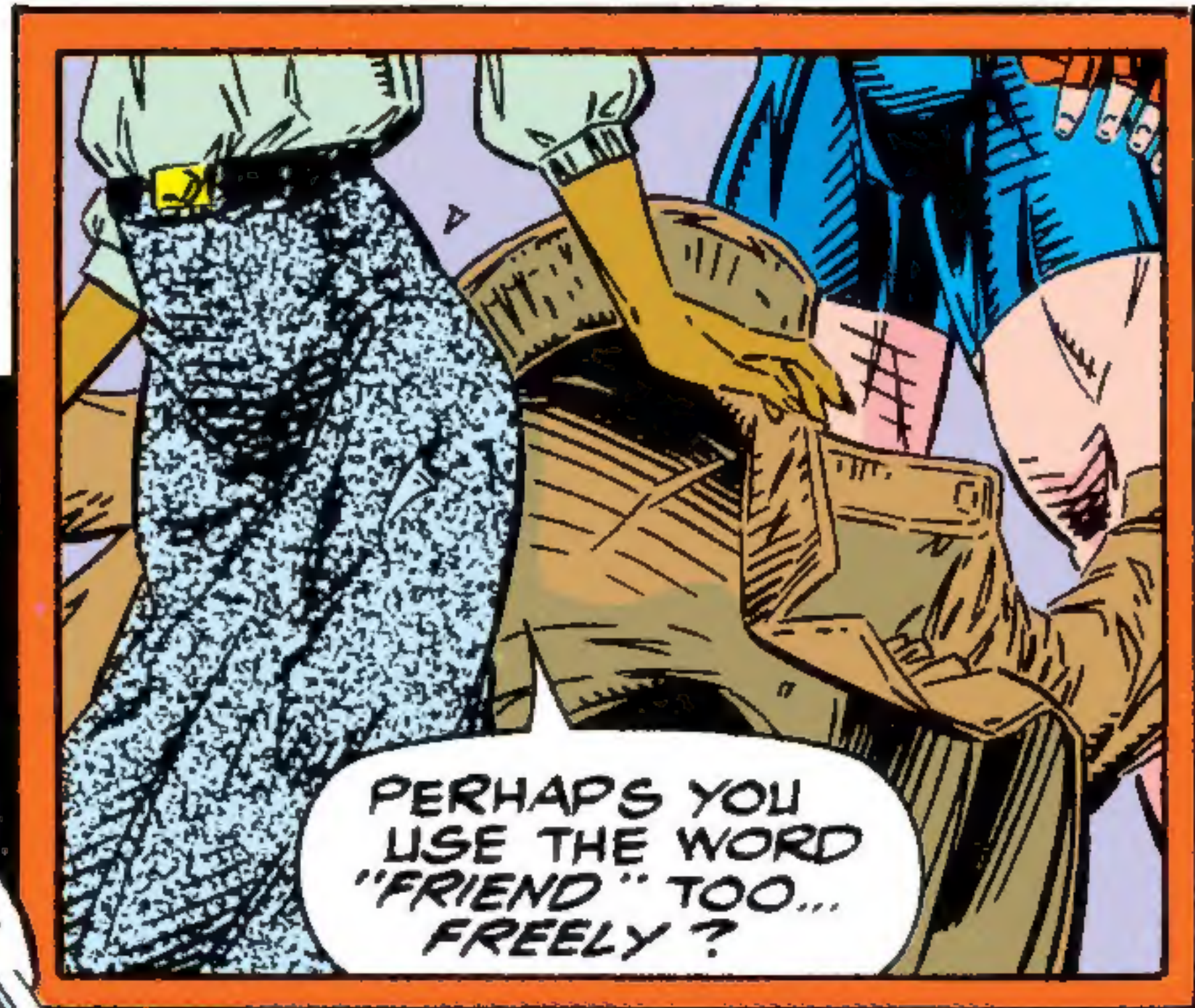




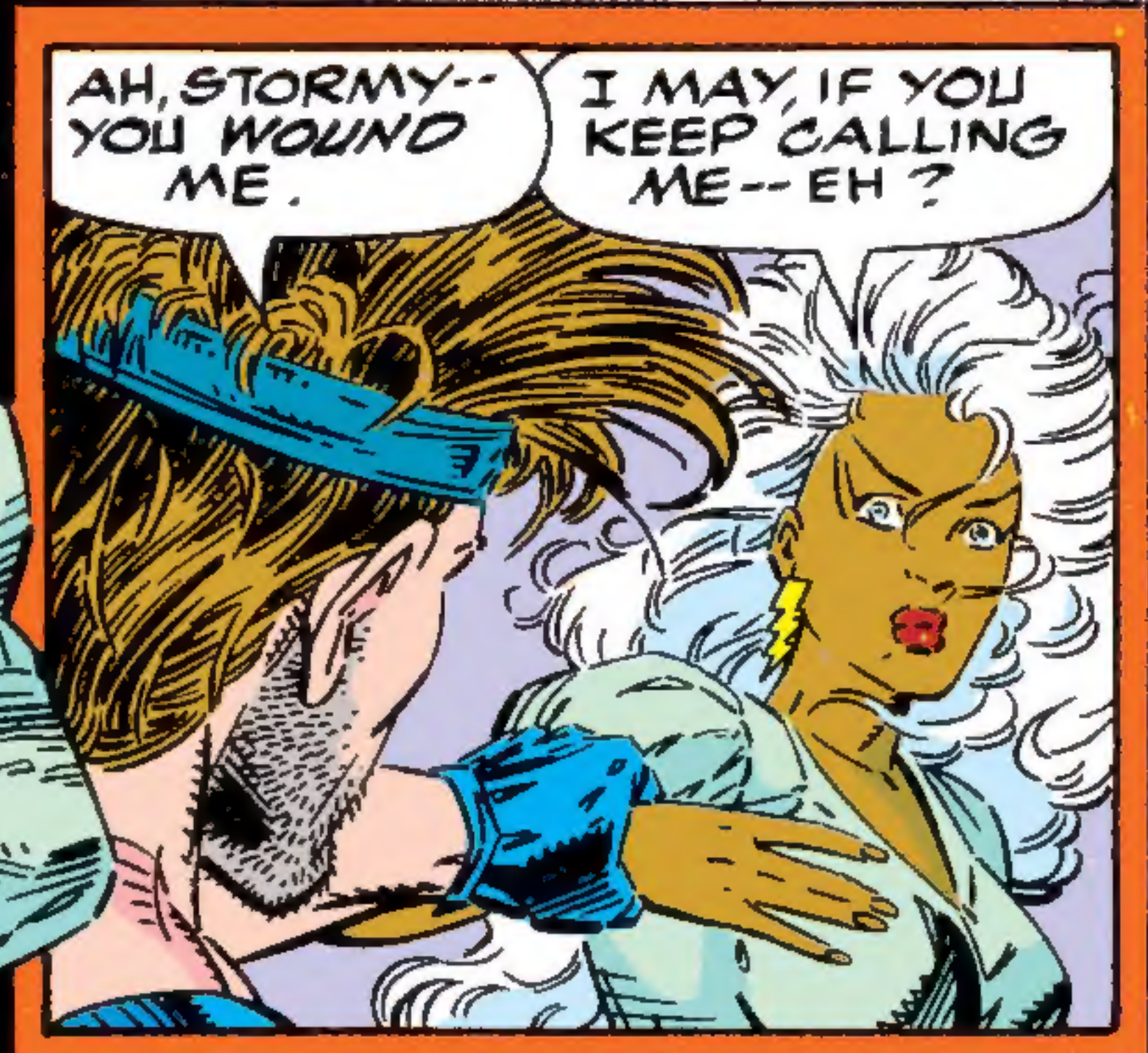
YOU ASK ME,
CHERE-- AIN'T
NOBODY GOOD
'NOUGH FOR
MY STORMY,
NO HOW.

I'M THINKING
Y' BETTER OFF
WIT' OUT FORGE.

HOW EXACT-
LY, DID YOU
EVEN HEAR
ABOUT MY
RECENT... ES-
TRANGEMENT?*



PERHAPS YOU
USE THE WORD
"FRIEND" TOO...
FREELY?



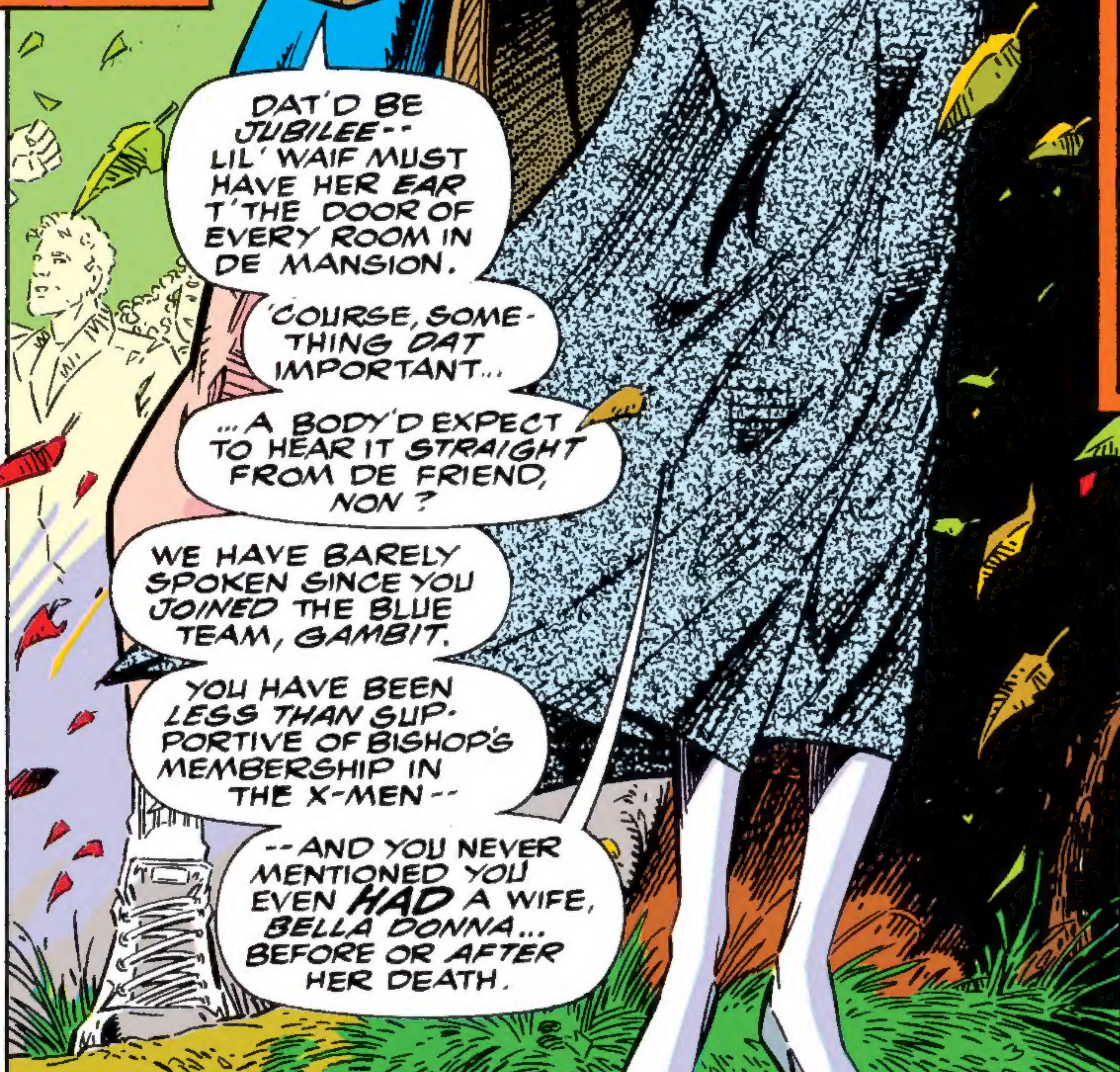
AH, STORMY--
YOU WOUND
ME.

I MAY, IF YOU
KEEP CALLING
ME-- EH?



DEATH
THREATS AND
DANCING?
TRES CHIC,
EH?

THIS IS ROCK
MUSIC, REMY--
WHY ARE WE
WALTZING?



DAT'D BE
JUBILEE--
LIL' WAIF MUST
HAVE HER EAR
T' THE DOOR OF
EVERY ROOM IN
DE MANSION.

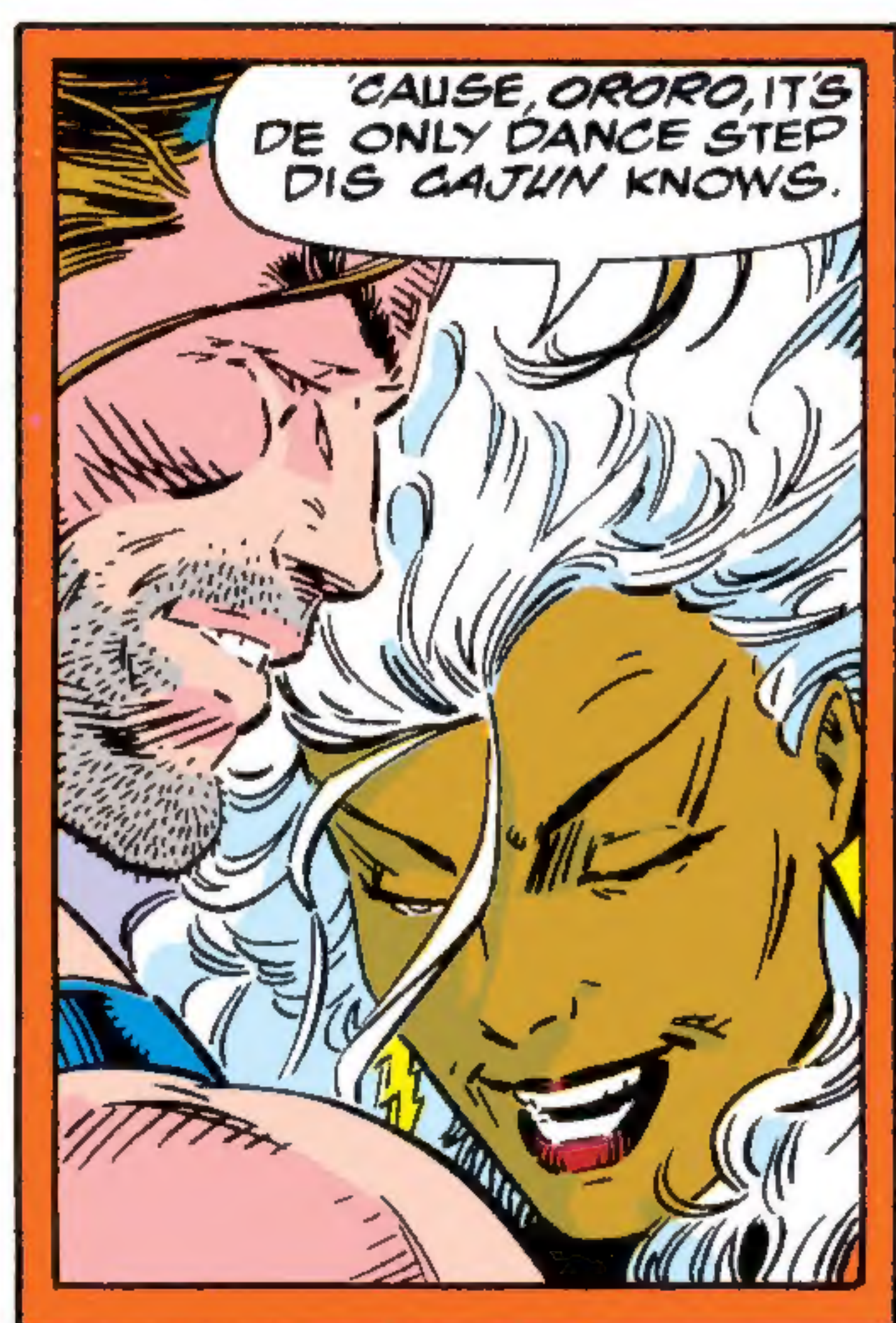
'COURSE, SOME-
THING DAT
IMPORTANT...

...A BODY'D EXPECT
TO HEAR IT STRAIGHT
FROM DE FRIEND,
NON?

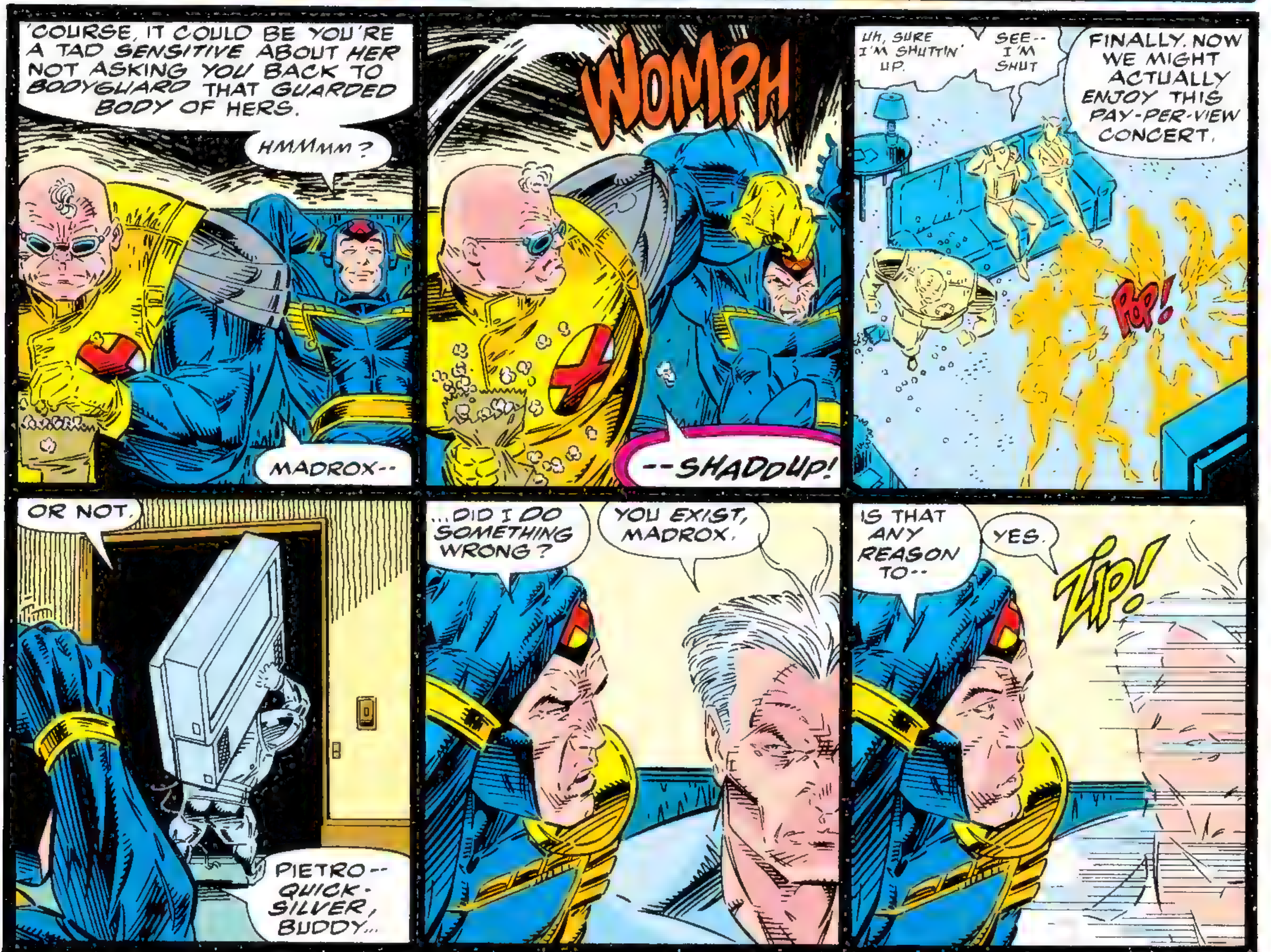
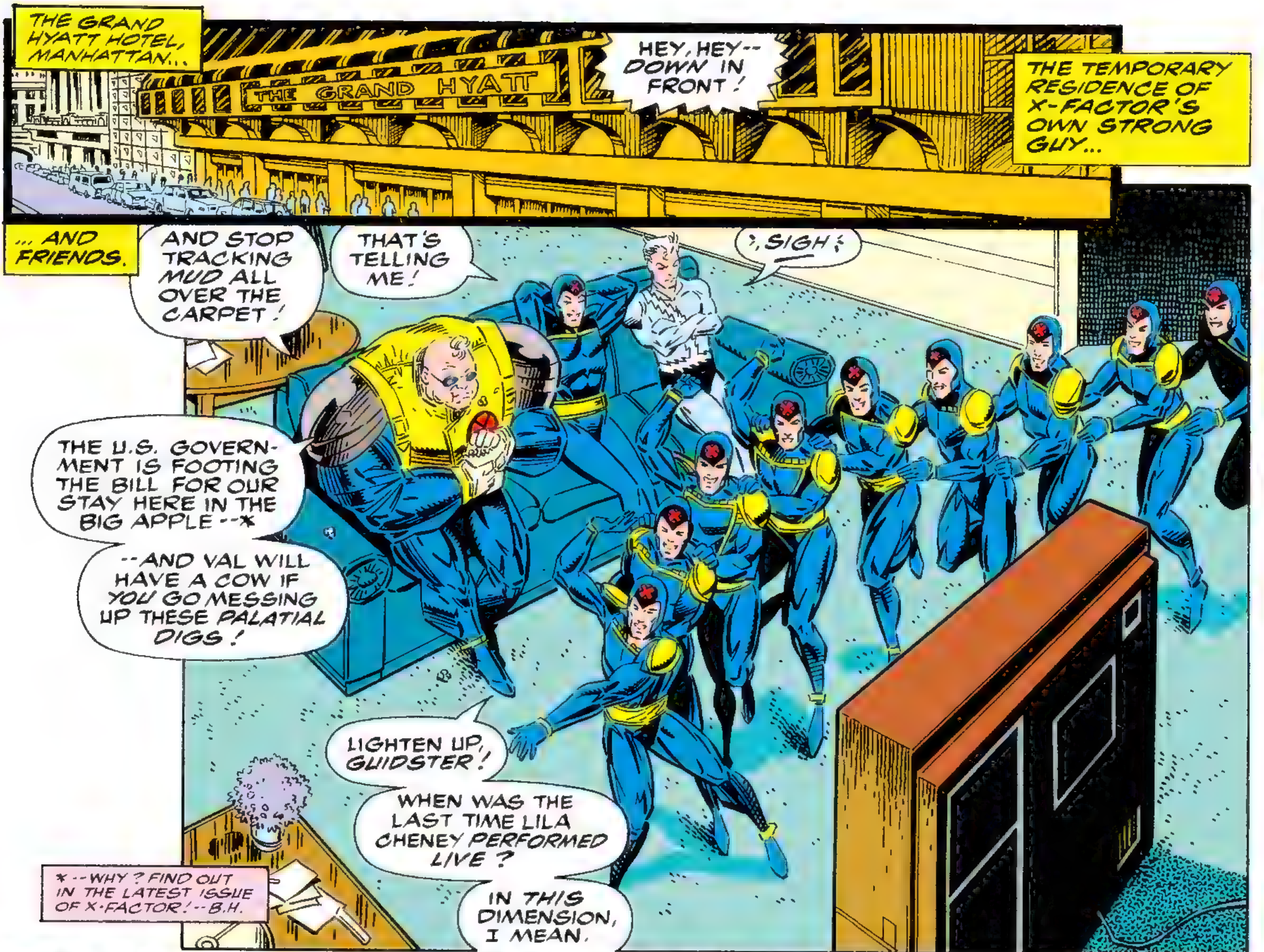
WE HAVE BARELY
SPOKEN SINCE YOU
JOINED THE BLUE
TEAM, GAMBIT.

YOU HAVE BEEN
LESS THAN SUP-
PORTIVE OF BISHOP'S
MEMBERSHIP IN
THE X-MEN--

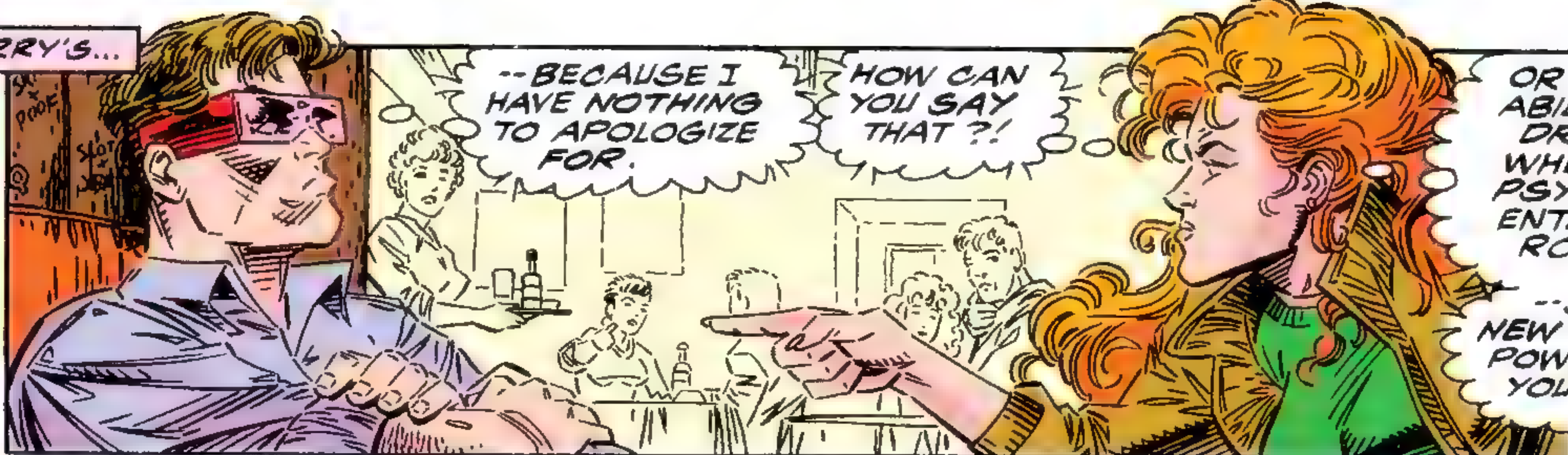
-- AND YOU NEVER
MENTIONED YOU
EVEN **HAD** A WIFE,
BELLA DONNA...
BEFORE OR AFTER
HER DEATH.



'CAUSE, ORORO, IT'S
DE ONLY DANCE STEP
DIS GAYUN KNOWS.



HARRY'S...



-- BECAUSE I HAVE NOTHING TO APOLOGIZE FOR.

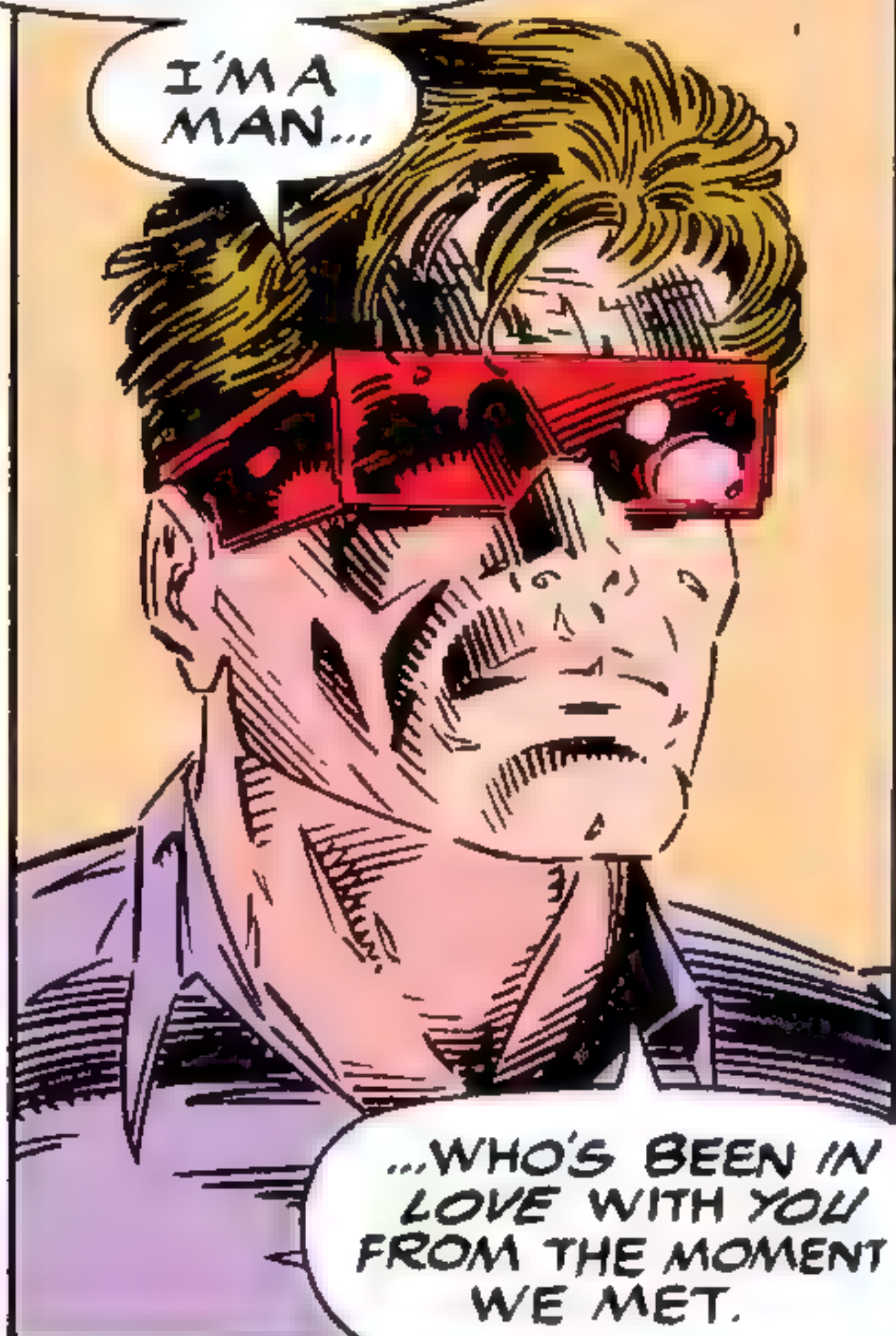
HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT?!

OR IS THIS ABILITY TO DROOL WHENEVER PSYLOCKE ENTERS A ROOM--

--SOME NEW MUTANT POWER OF YOURS?

SHE'S A WOMAN, JEAN-- AN EXCEPTIONALLY GORGEOUS AND SEXY ONE AT THAT.

I'M A MAN...

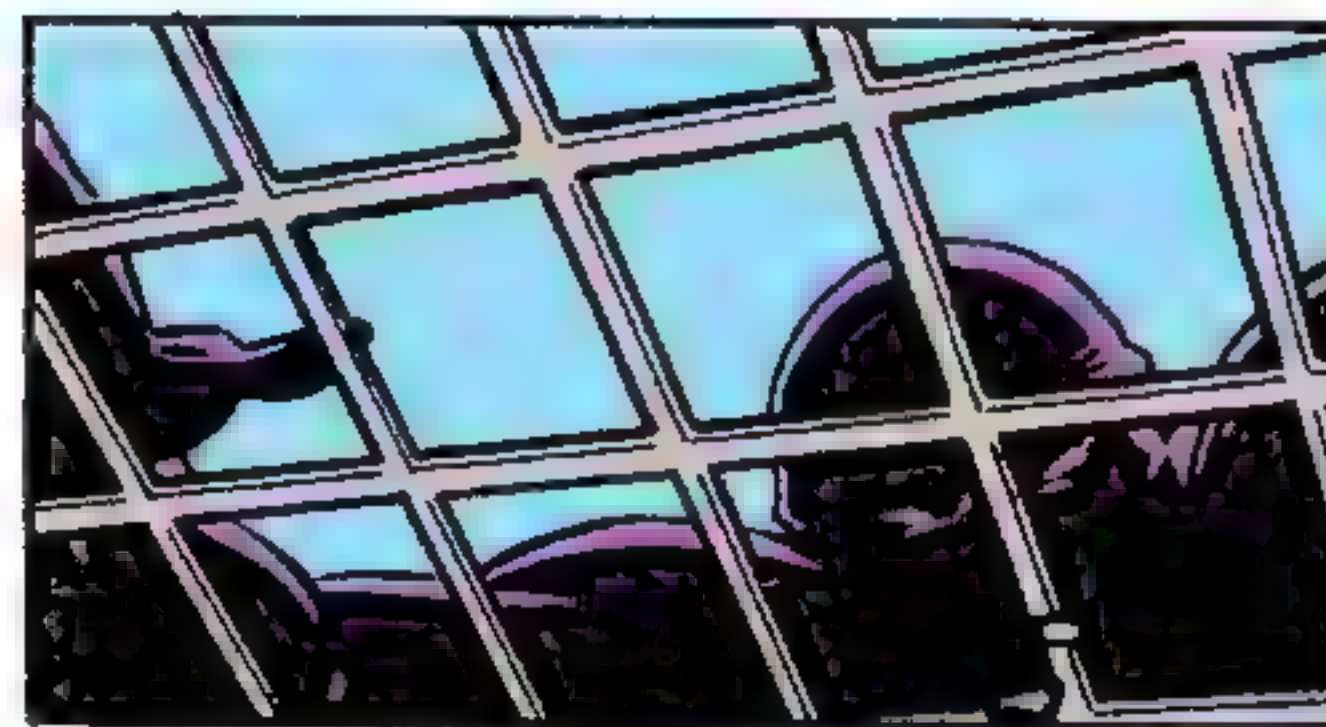
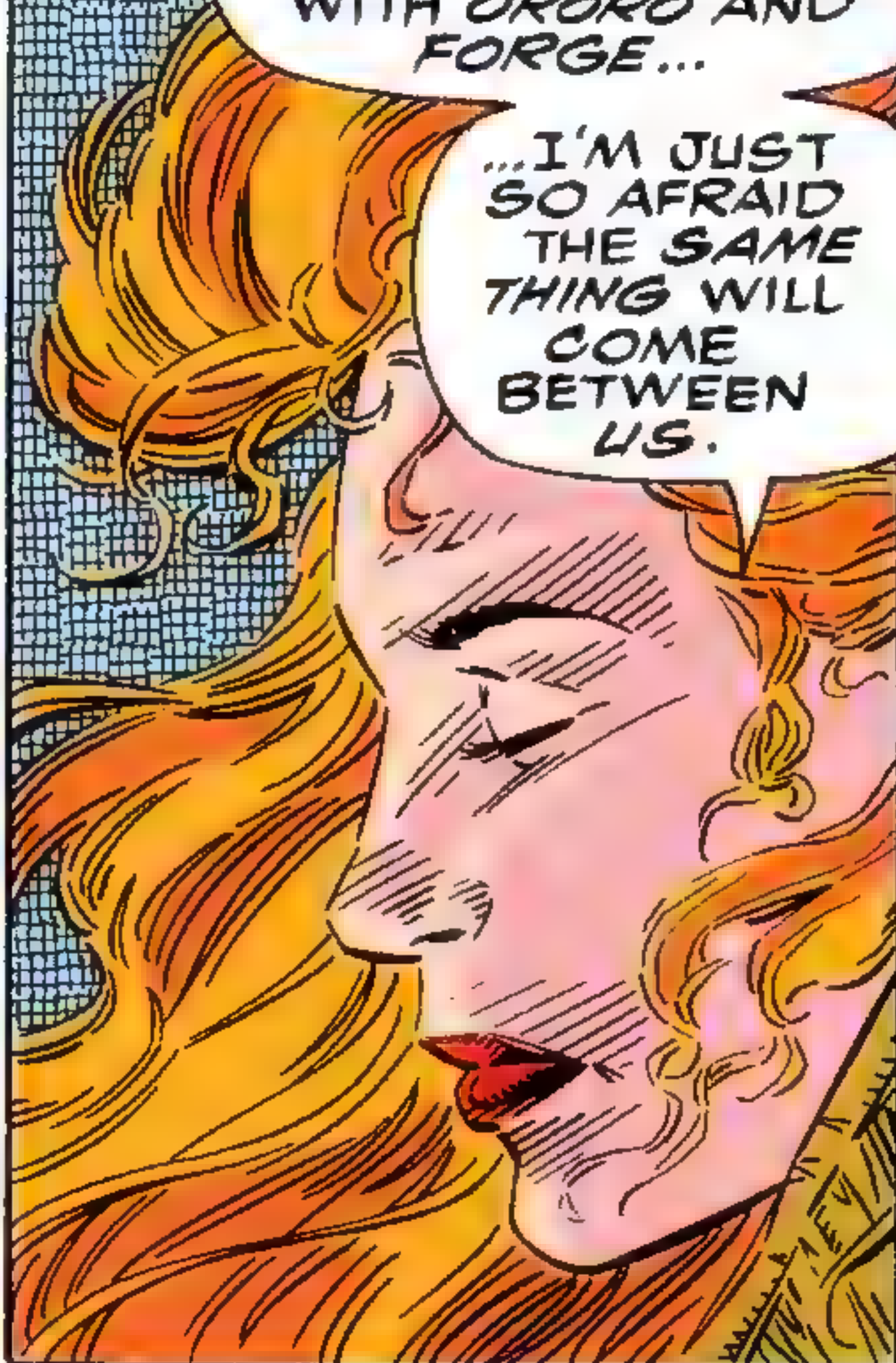


...WHO'S BEEN IN LOVE WITH YOU FROM THE MOMENT WE MET.

AFTER ALL WE'VE BEEN THROUGH, YOU'RE WILLING TO LET JEALOUSY JEOPARDIZE WHAT WE HAVE?

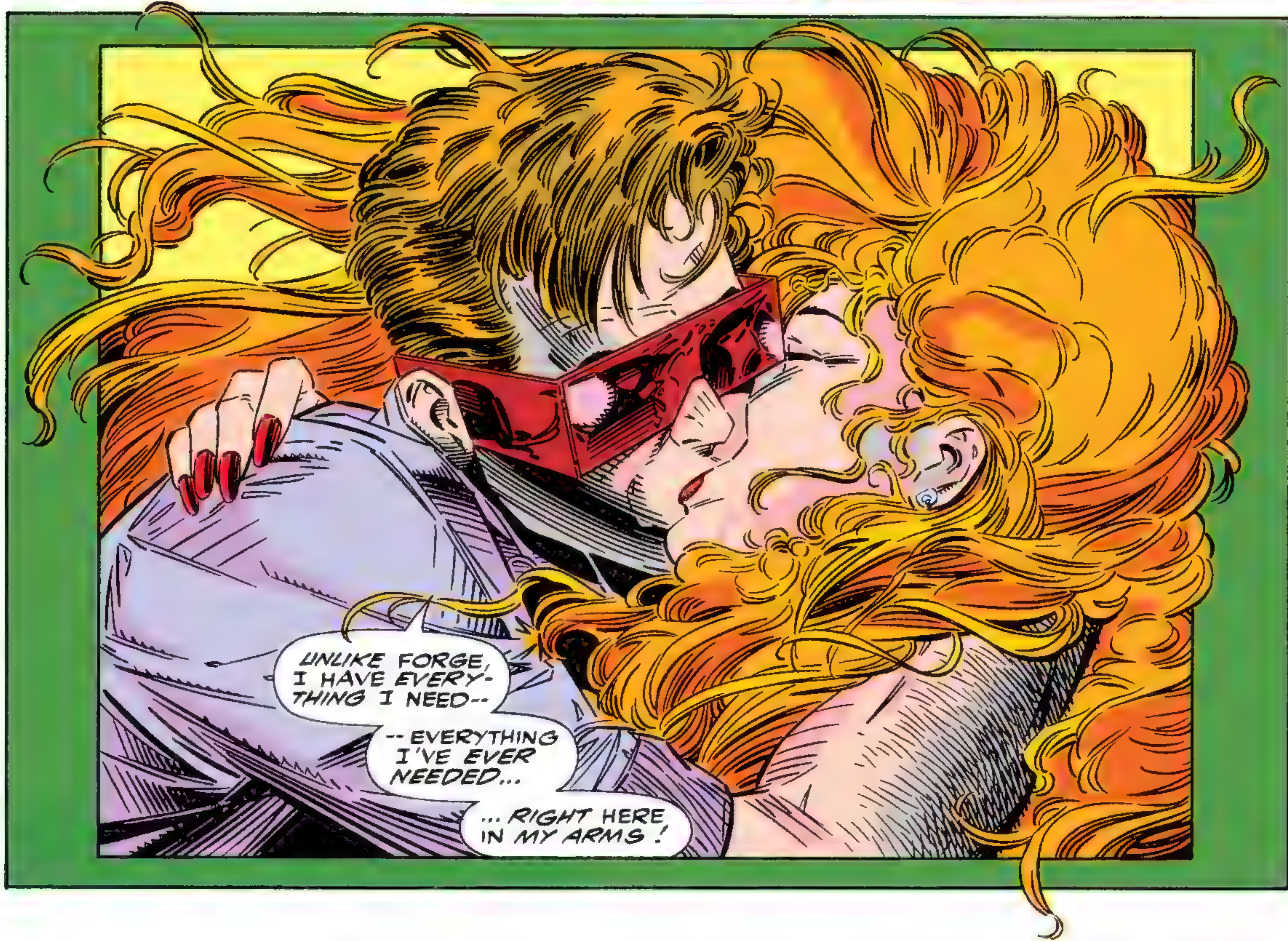
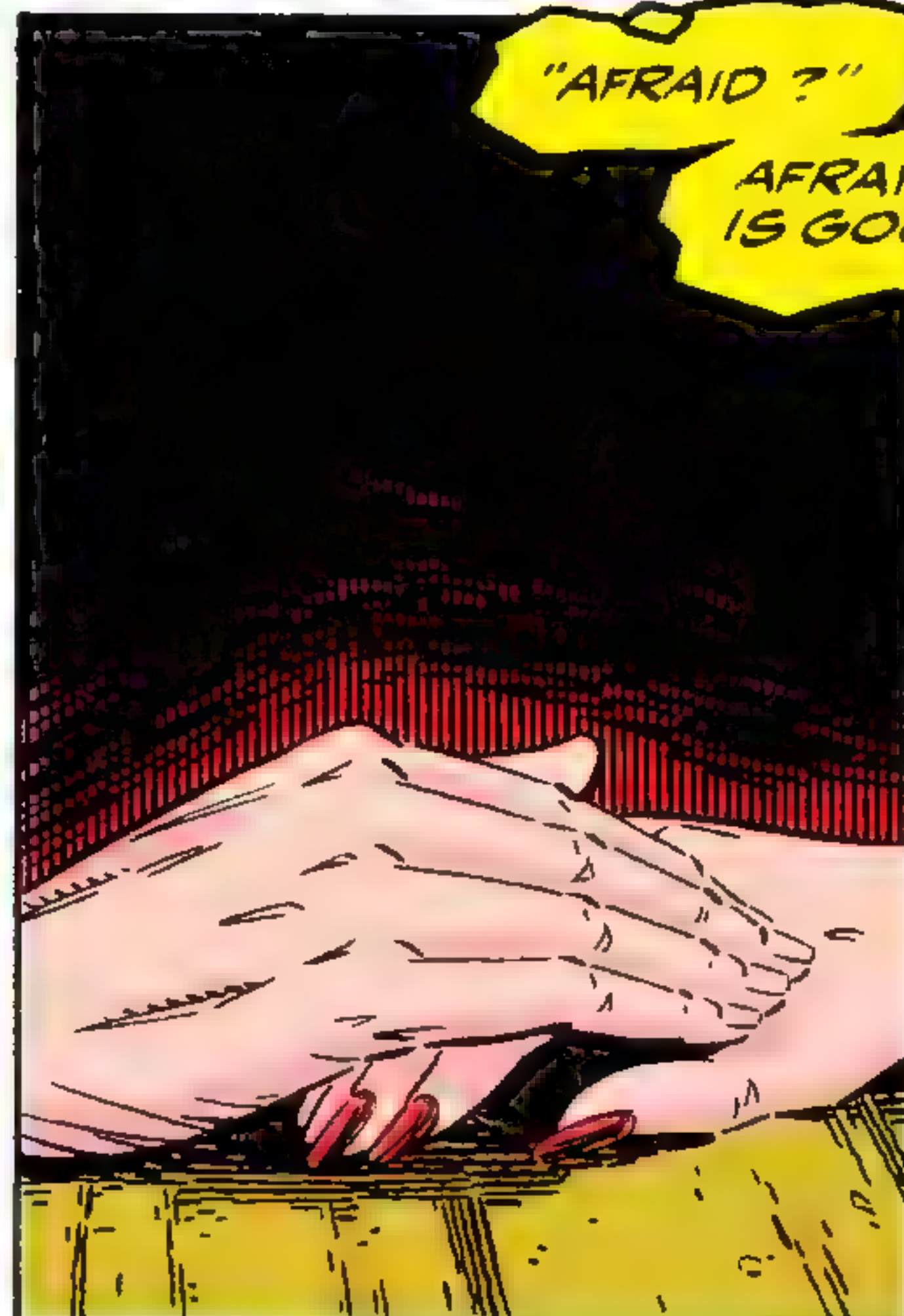
OF COURSE NOT-- IT'S JUST, AFTER WHAT HAPPENED WITH ORORO AND FORGE...

...I'M JUST SO AFRAID THE SAME THING WILL COME BETWEEN US.



"AFRAID?"

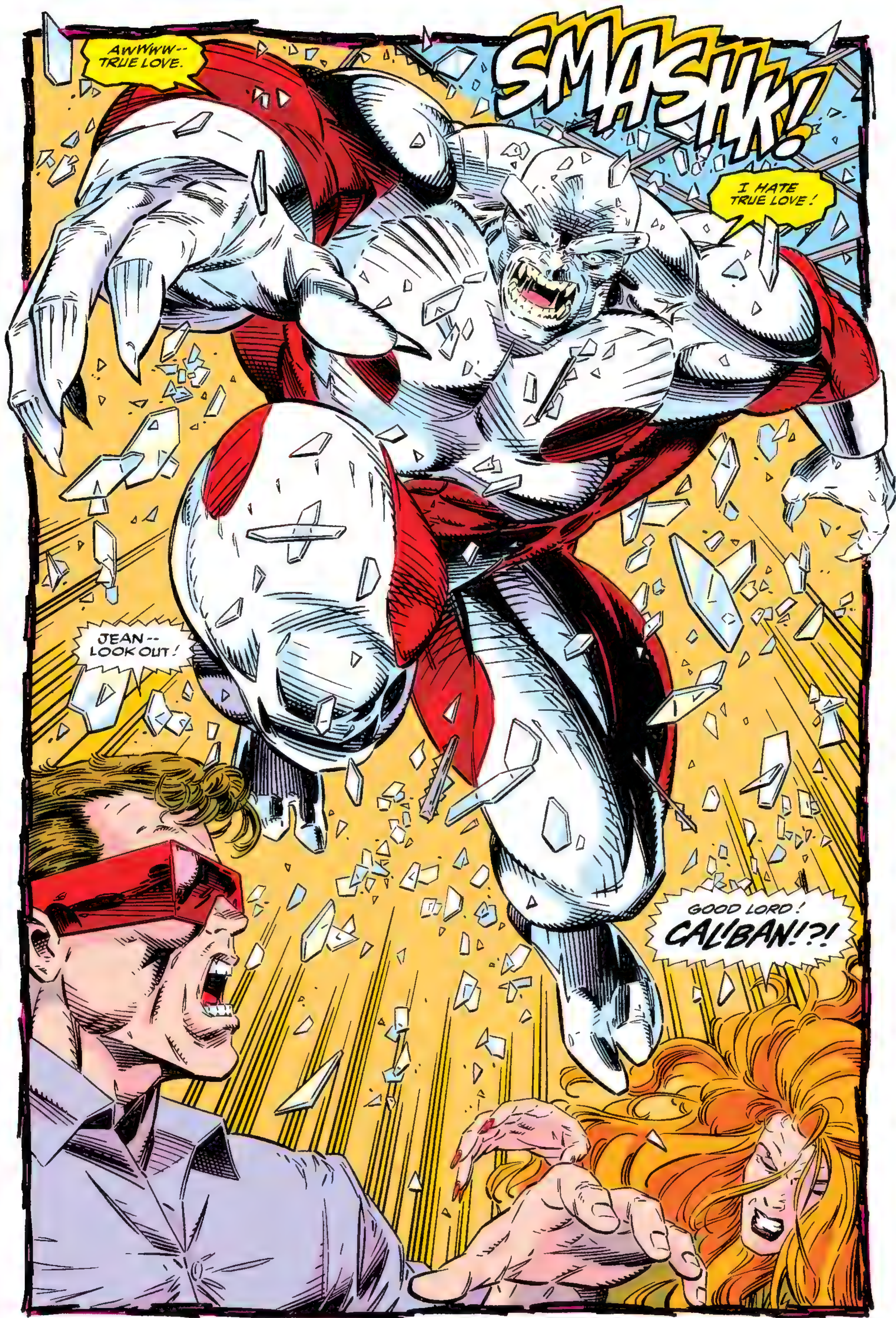
AFRAID IS GOOD.

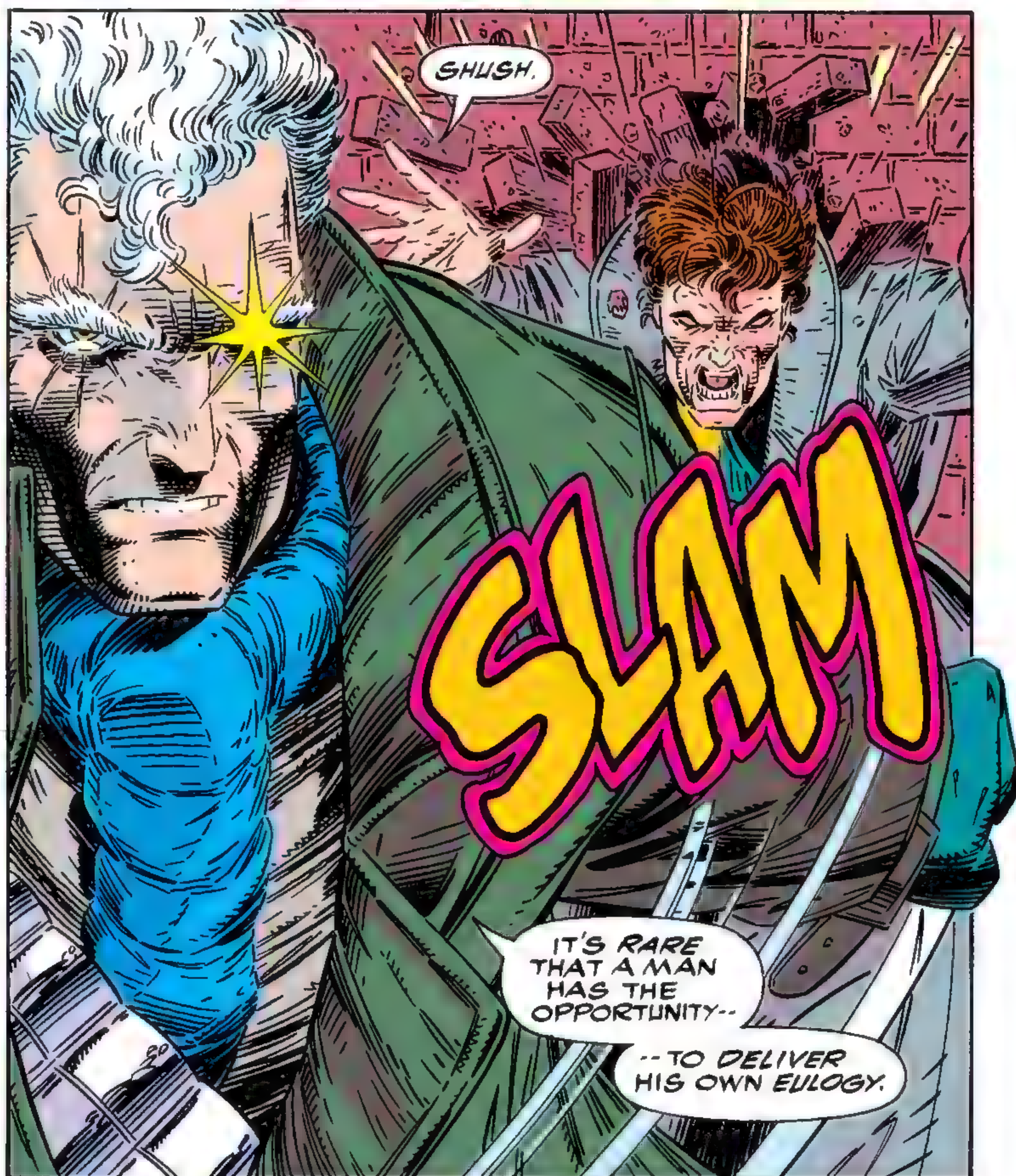
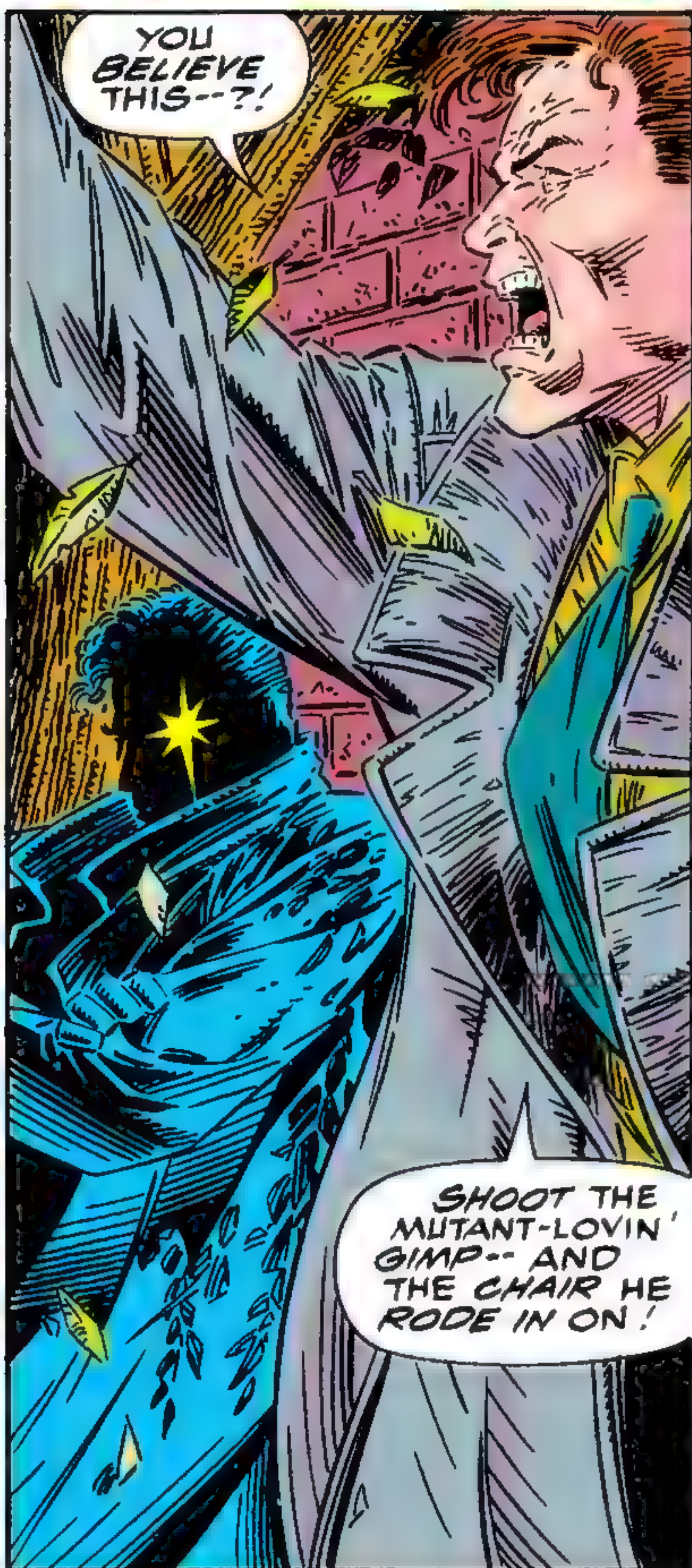
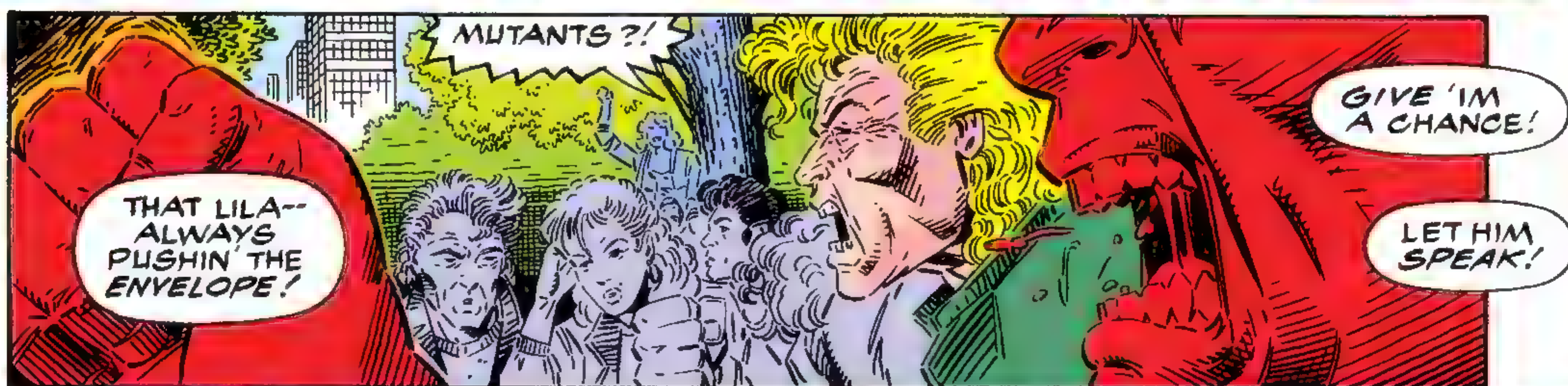
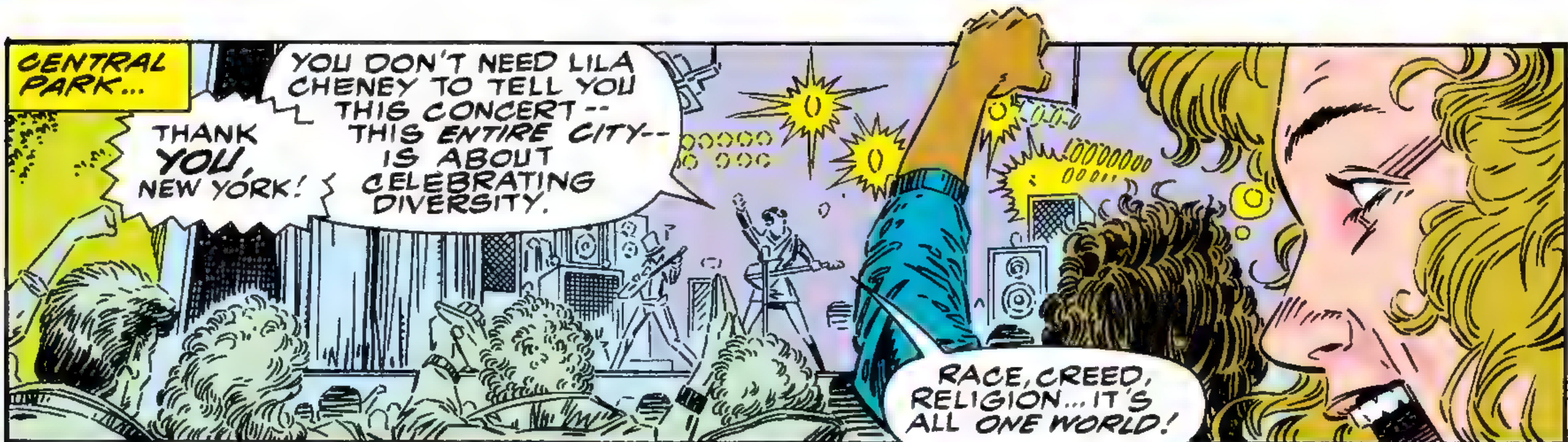


UNLIKE FORGE, I HAVE EVERYTHING I NEED--

-- EVERYTHING I'VE EVER NEEDED...

... RIGHT HERE IN MY ARMS!





SALEM
CENTER.

ROBERT--?!

I SEE IT,
PETER.

EITHER
HARRY'S
RAN OUT
OF BEER--

--OR JEAN AND
SCOTT NEED THE
POWER OF
COLOSSUS AND
ICEMAN!

QUICKLY, WHILE
EVERYONE'S
ATTENTION IS
DRAWN TO THE
PUB!

WHO KNOWS,
BIG C-- THIS COULD
BE THE START OF
A TREND?

THE DAY MAY COME
THAT THE X-MEN ARE
AMBUSHED SOME-
WHERE OTHER THAN
THE CAMPUS!

WE SHOULD
LIVE SO
LONG.

**BRA-KRA
BOOM!**

REST
ASSURED,
X-MEN...

FAMINE
AND WAR WILL
SEE THAT
YOU DON'T!

IN THE NAME
OF EVOLUTION...
WE CLAIM YOUR
WORTHLESS
LIVES ON BEHALF
OF OUR LORD
AND MASTER!

FOR YOU AND YOUR
ILK ARE THE WEAK--
PLAGUED BY CONSCIENCE
AND CONCERN FOR THE
VERMIN THAT IS
HUMANITY!

KNOW THEN, THAT
YOUR ACTIONS
DICTATE YOU WERE
BORN ONLY TO
PERISH UNDER
THE HOOF OF THE...
HORSEMEN OF

APOCALYPSE!

FREAK.

DEADEND.

FLATSCAN.

GENEJOKE.

MUTIE.

WORDS.
POWERFUL
WORDS MEANT
TO DISTANCE...
TO DEMEAN...

... TO DESTROY THE
HAVENS OF SELF
RESPECT WE EACH
CARRY AND NURTURE
WITHIN US--

-- JUST AS SURELY
AS THEY SEEK TO REND
THE CENTURIES OLD
TAPESTRY WE, AS A
RACE, HAVE AGREED
TO CALL CIVILIZATION.

THESE WORDS
CARRY US AWAY
FROM THE LIGHT
AND LEAD US
MARCHING, NO--
CHARGING-- INTO
A DARKNESS
WHERE PREJU-
DICE AND
BIGOTRY REIGN.

UGLY, HATEFUL WORDS
AS WEAPONS... AND WORDS
THAT ULTIMATELY FAIL TO
ACHIEVE THEIR INTENDED
PURPOSE.

THIS CONCERT IS ABOUT
EMBRACING OUR UNIQUE-
NESS-- THE COLOR OF
A MAN'S SKIN, THE
CHOICE OF WHOM
WE LOVE--

--THE RIGHT FOR
YOUR NEIGHBOR
TO PURSUE HIS
INDIVIDUAL RELIG-
IOUS OBSERVANCE.

ISN'T IT ALSO ABOUT
LEARNING TO RESPECT
THE PERSON BORN WITH
A TORSO FIN, CURSED
WITH AN OPTIC BLAST, OR
BLESSED WITH THE
NATURAL POWERS OF
TELEKINESIS?

SEEING PAST THEIR
DIFFERENCES, HUMANS
AND MUTANTS SHARE
A COMMON UNBREAK-
ABLE BOND.

NO AMOUNT OF
WORDS--OF DERISION,
DISTRUST, OR DISIN-
FORMATION-- CAN
CHANGE THE TRUTH THAT
EACH OF US...

...MAN, WOMAN, BLACK,
HISPANIC, JEW, ASIAN,
NATIVE AMERICAN,
HOMOSEXUAL, MUTANT,
EVERYONE...

... UNDERNEATH
ALL THE "WORDS"...
WE ARE RELATED.
WE ARE ALL FAMILY.

NO "FAMILY"
I KNOW'VE GOT
SCALES GROWIN'
ON THEIR
FACES!

AT LEAST I CAN
SEE THE DIF-
FERENCE IN SKIN
COLOR-- MUTANTS
CAN HIDE ANY-
WHERE!

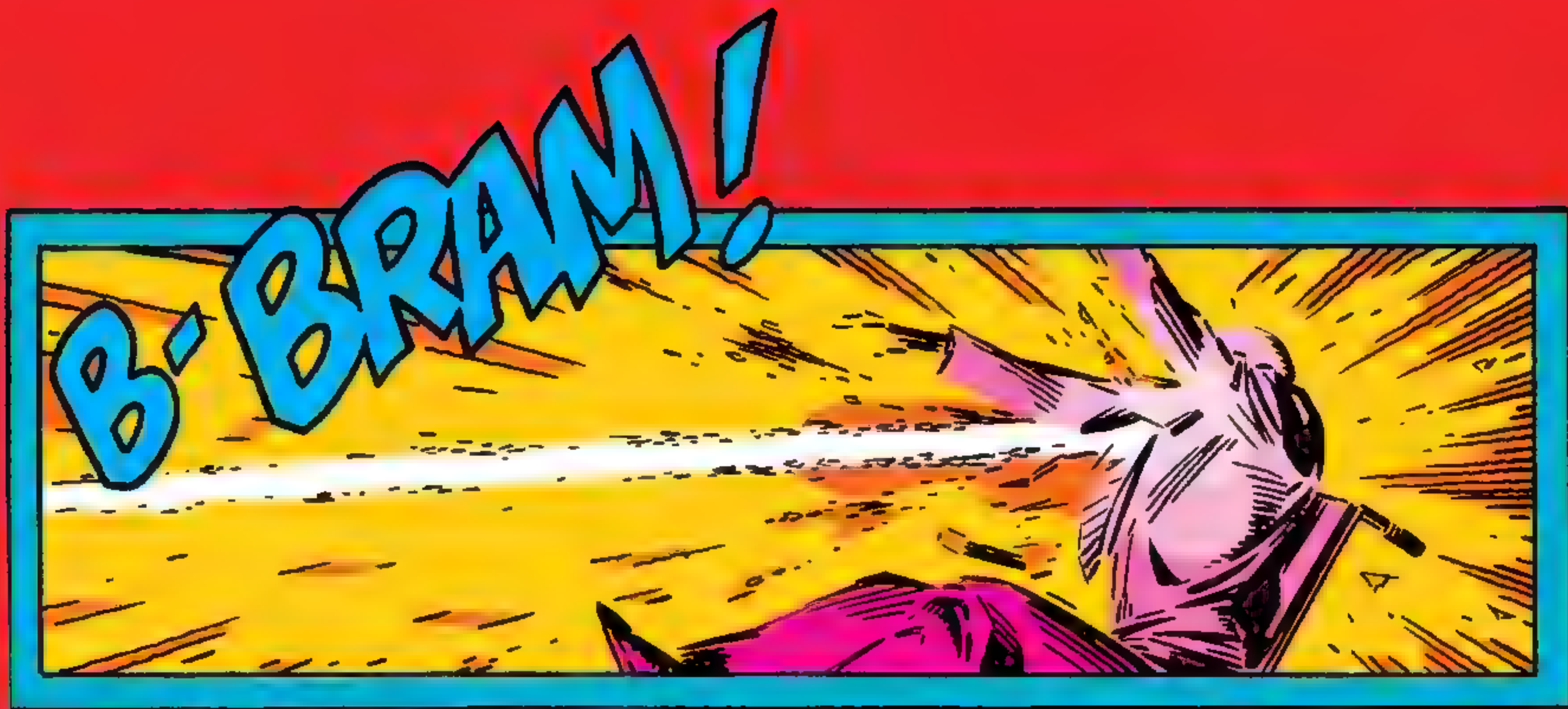
GROW SOME
HAIR, YA MUTIE
LOVER!

WARREN...
I'M
SORRY.

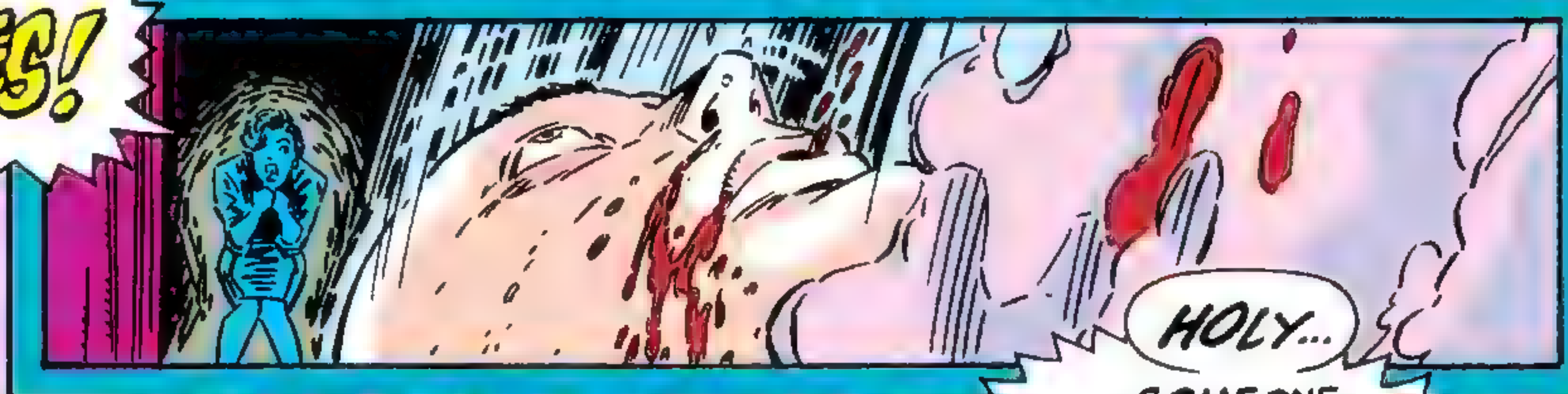
SAVE YER
SPEECH FOR
THE ASPCA
CONCERT!

DON'T BE,
CHAR...

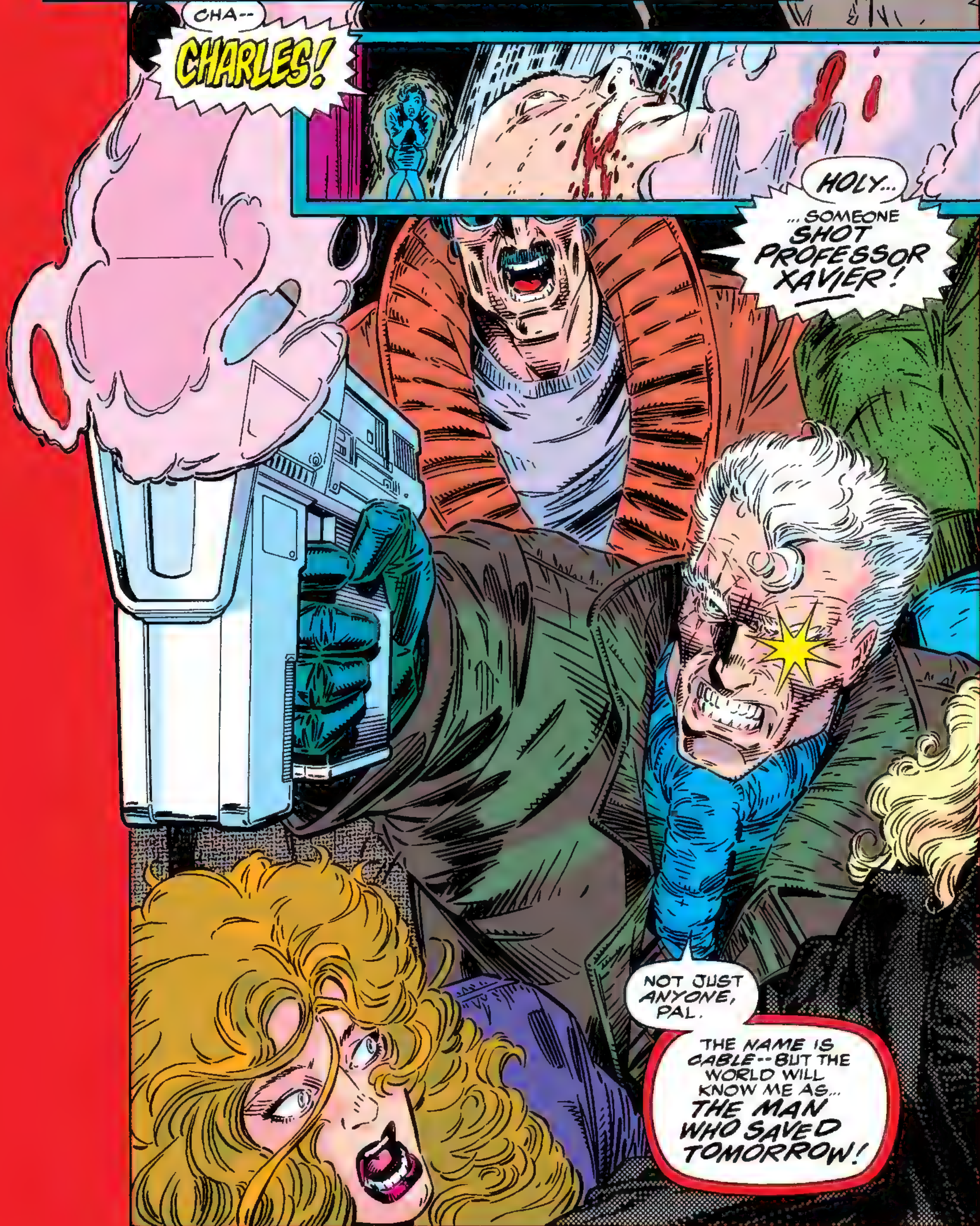
... HE
HAD TO
TRY.



CHA--
CHARLES!

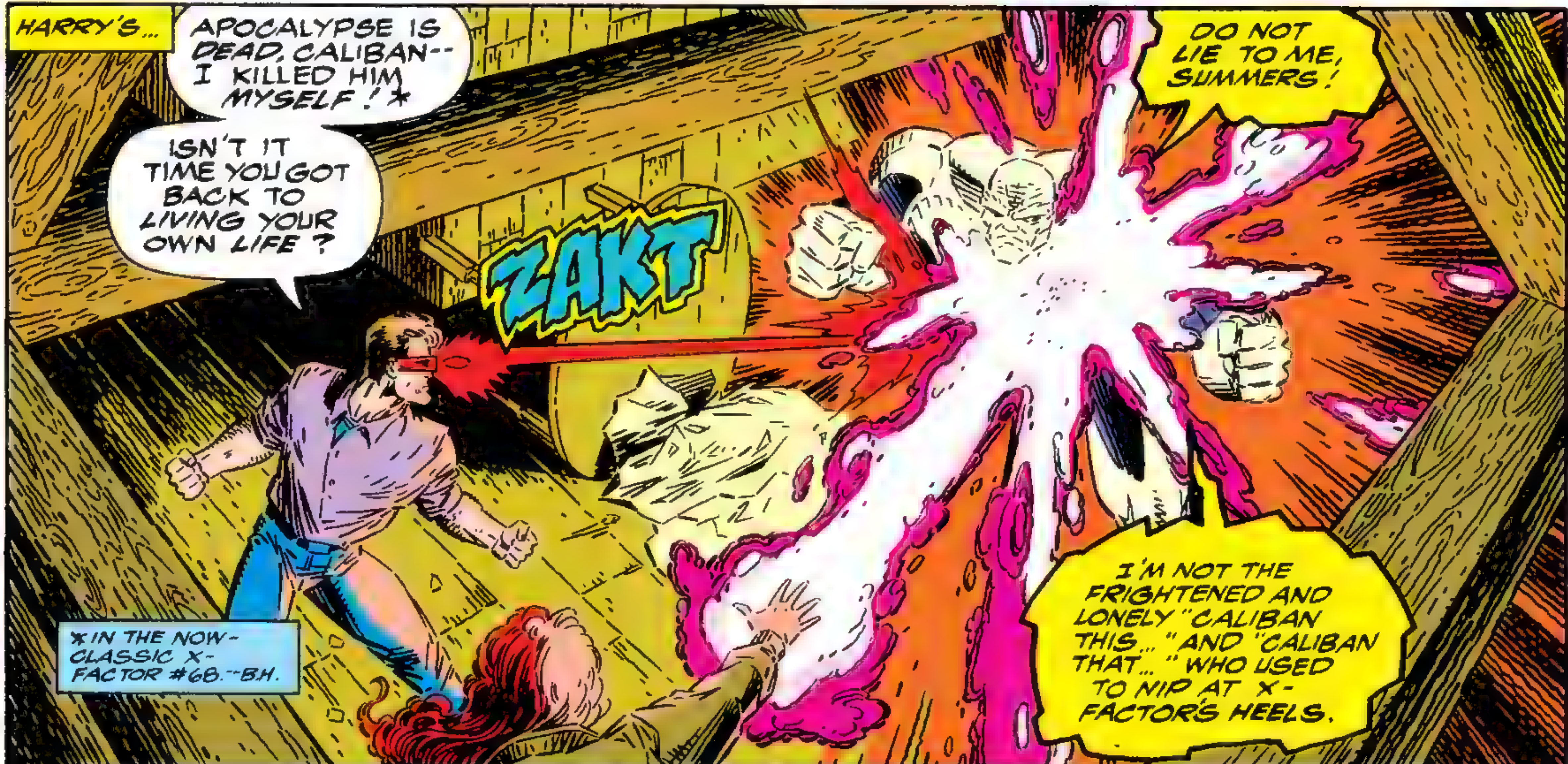


HOLY...
... SOMEONE
SHOT
PROFESSOR
XAVIER!



NOT JUST
ANYONE,
PAL.

THE NAME IS
CABLE--BUT THE
WORLD WILL
KNOW ME AS...
THE MAN
WHO SAVED
TOMORROW!



HARRY'S...
APOCALYPSE IS DEAD, CALIBAN--
I KILLED HIM MYSELF! *

ISN'T IT
TIME YOU GOT
BACK TO
LIVING YOUR
OWN LIFE?

ZAKT

DO NOT
LIE TO ME,
SUMMERS!

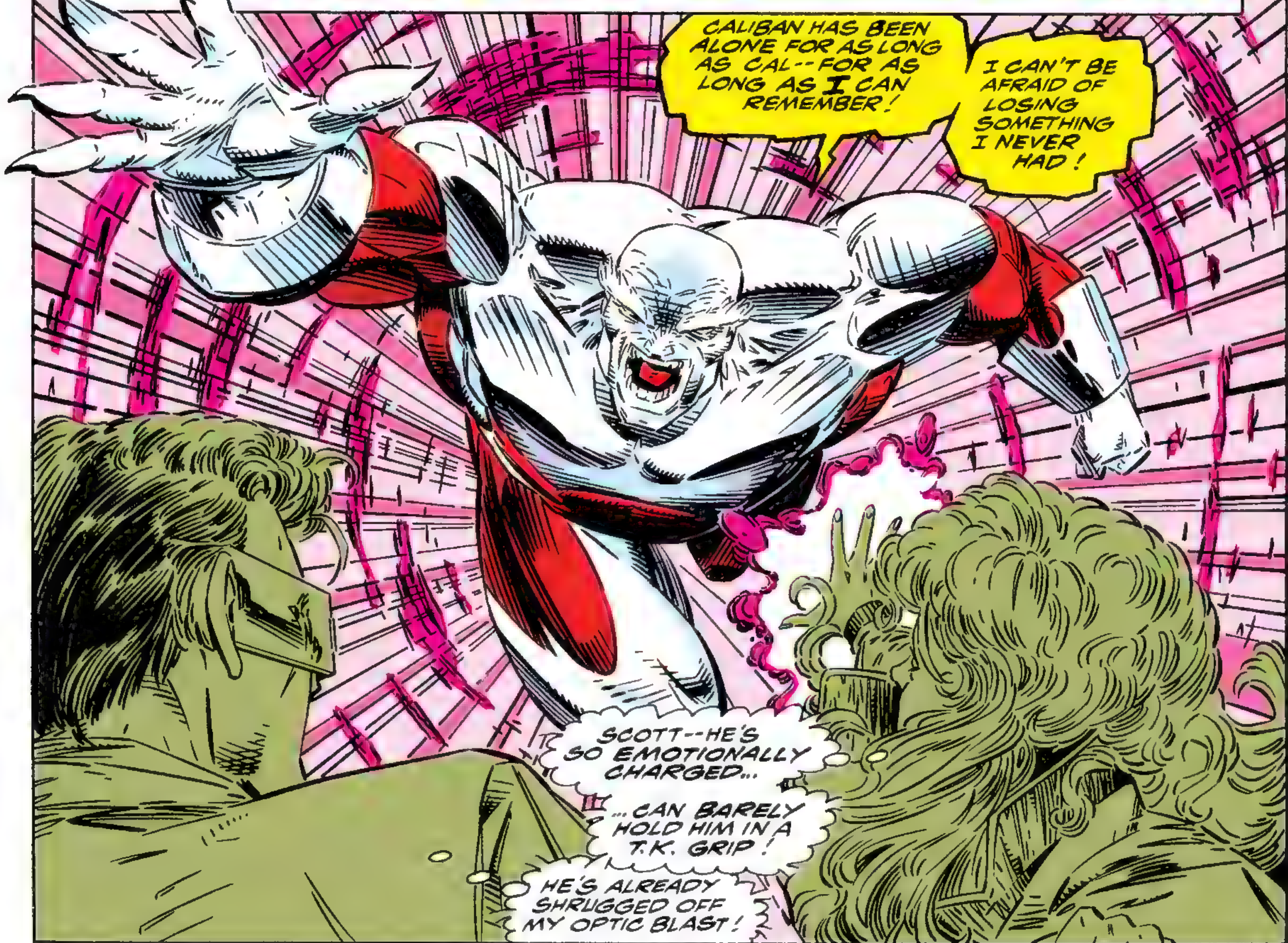
*IN THE NOW-
CLASSIC X-
FACTOR #68--BH.

I'M NOT THE
FRIGHTENED AND
LONELY "CALIBAN
THIS..." AND "CALIBAN
THAT..." WHO USED
TO NIP AT X-
FACTOR'S HEELS.



I AM ABOUT
POWER,
NOW!

THE POWER TO
DRAW STRENGTH
FROM FEAR--
FEAR, SAY, OF
"COMMITMENT"?!



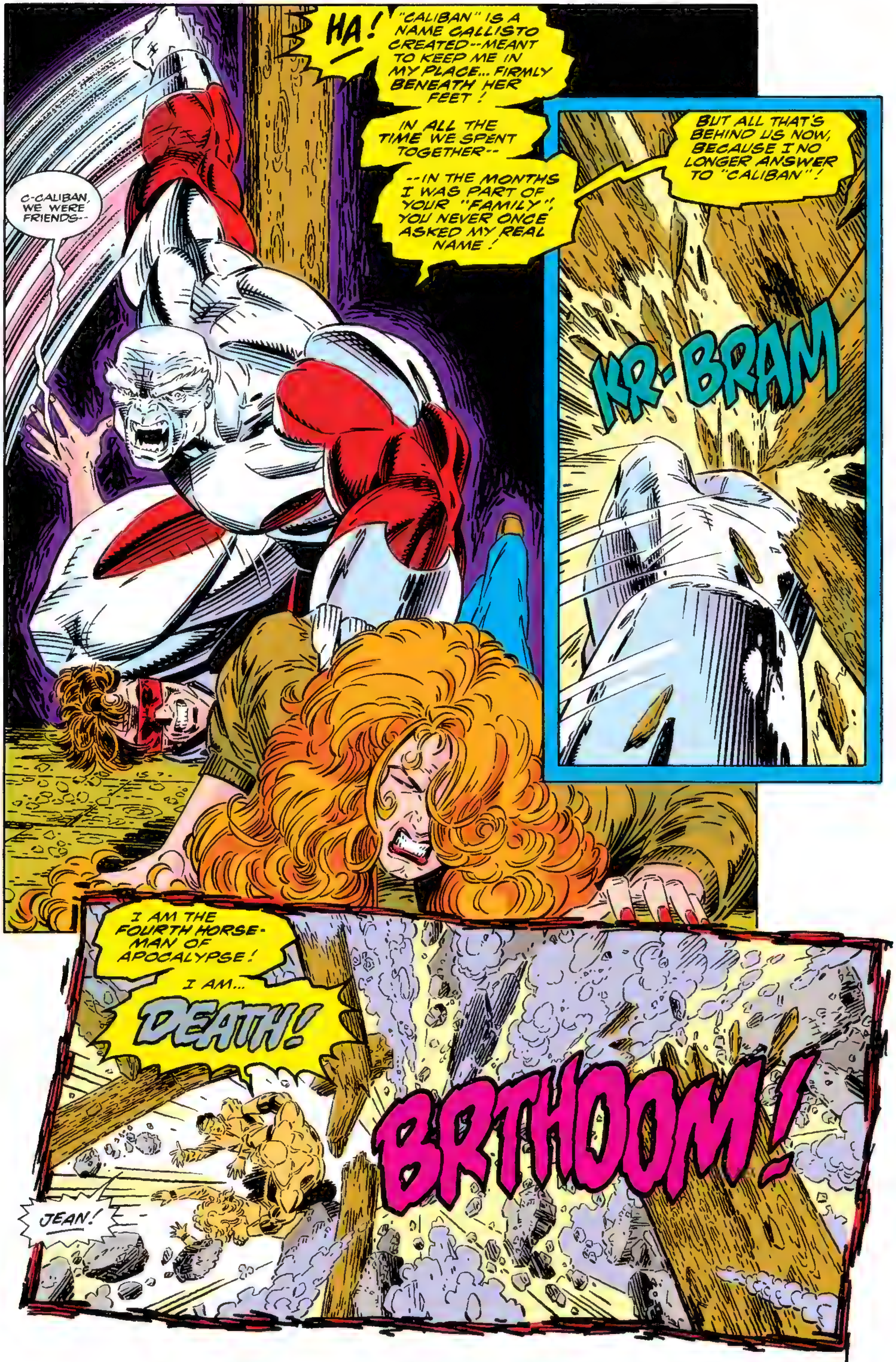
CALIBAN HAS BEEN
ALONE FOR AS LONG
AS CAL--FOR AS
LONG AS I CAN
REMEMBER!

I CAN'T BE
AFRAID OF
LOSING
SOMETHING
I NEVER
HAD!

SCOTT--HE'S
SO EMOTIONALLY
CHARGED...

...CAN BARELY
HOLD HIM IN A
T.K. GRIP!

HE'S ALREADY
SHRUGGED OFF
MY OPTIC BLAST!



HA!

"CALIBAN" IS A NAME CALLISTO CREATED--MEANT TO KEEP ME IN MY PLACE... FIRMLY BENEATH HER FEET!

IN ALL THE TIME WE SPENT TOGETHER--

--IN THE MONTHS I WAS PART OF YOUR "FAMILY", YOU NEVER ONCE ASKED MY REAL NAME!

C-CALIBAN, WE WERE FRIENDS--

BUT ALL THAT'S BEHIND US NOW, BECAUSE I NO LONGER ANSWER TO "CALIBAN"!

KR-BRAM

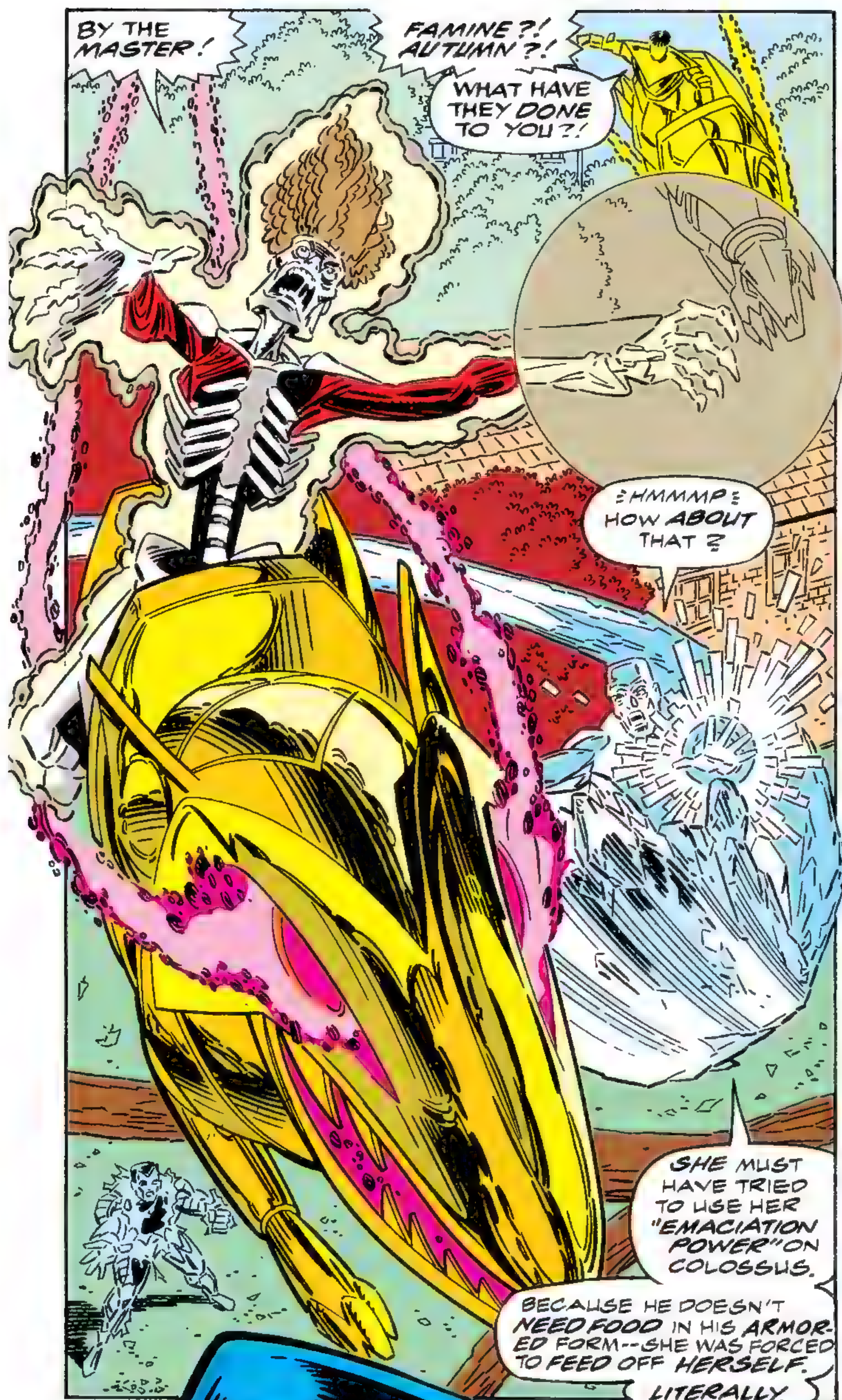
I AM THE FOURTH HORSEMAN OF APOCALYPSE!

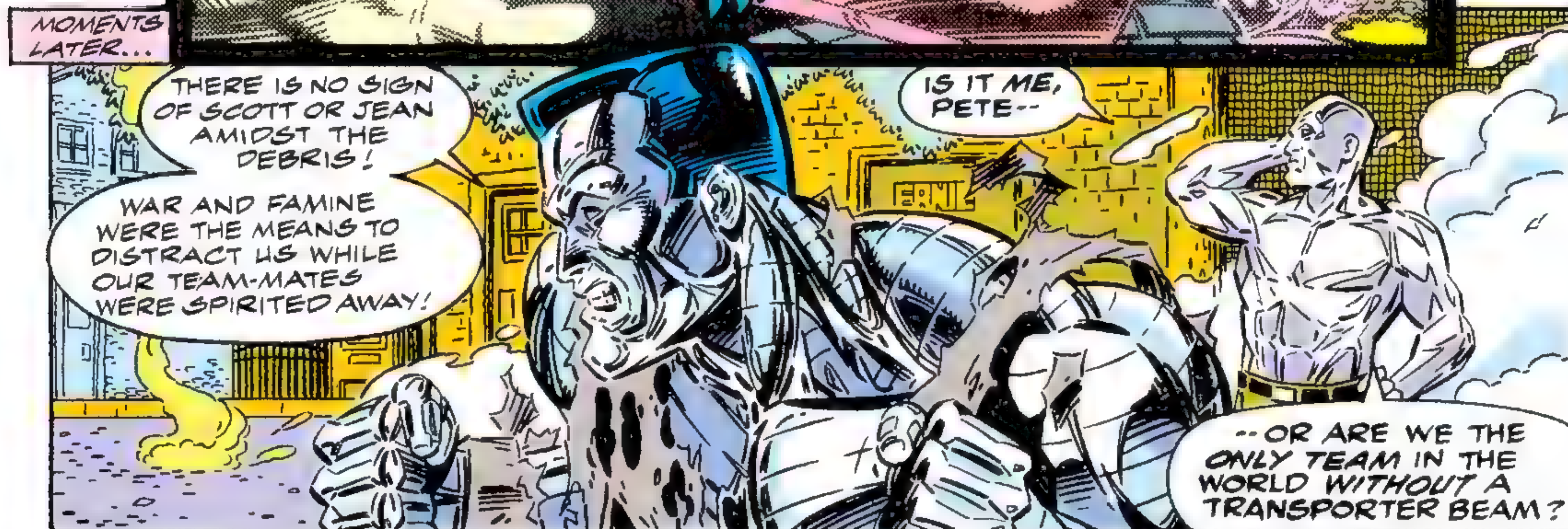
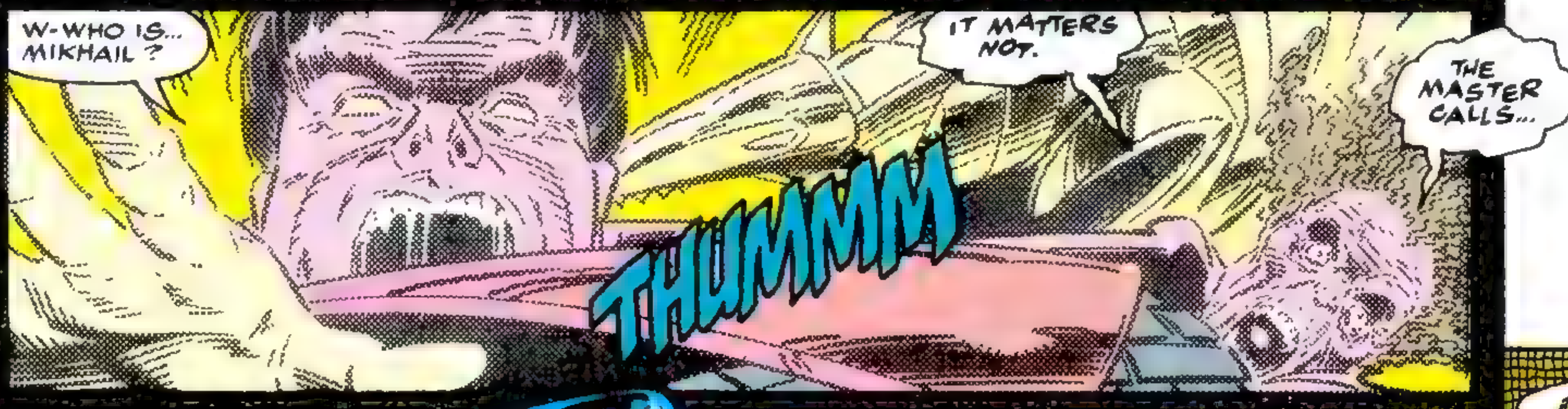
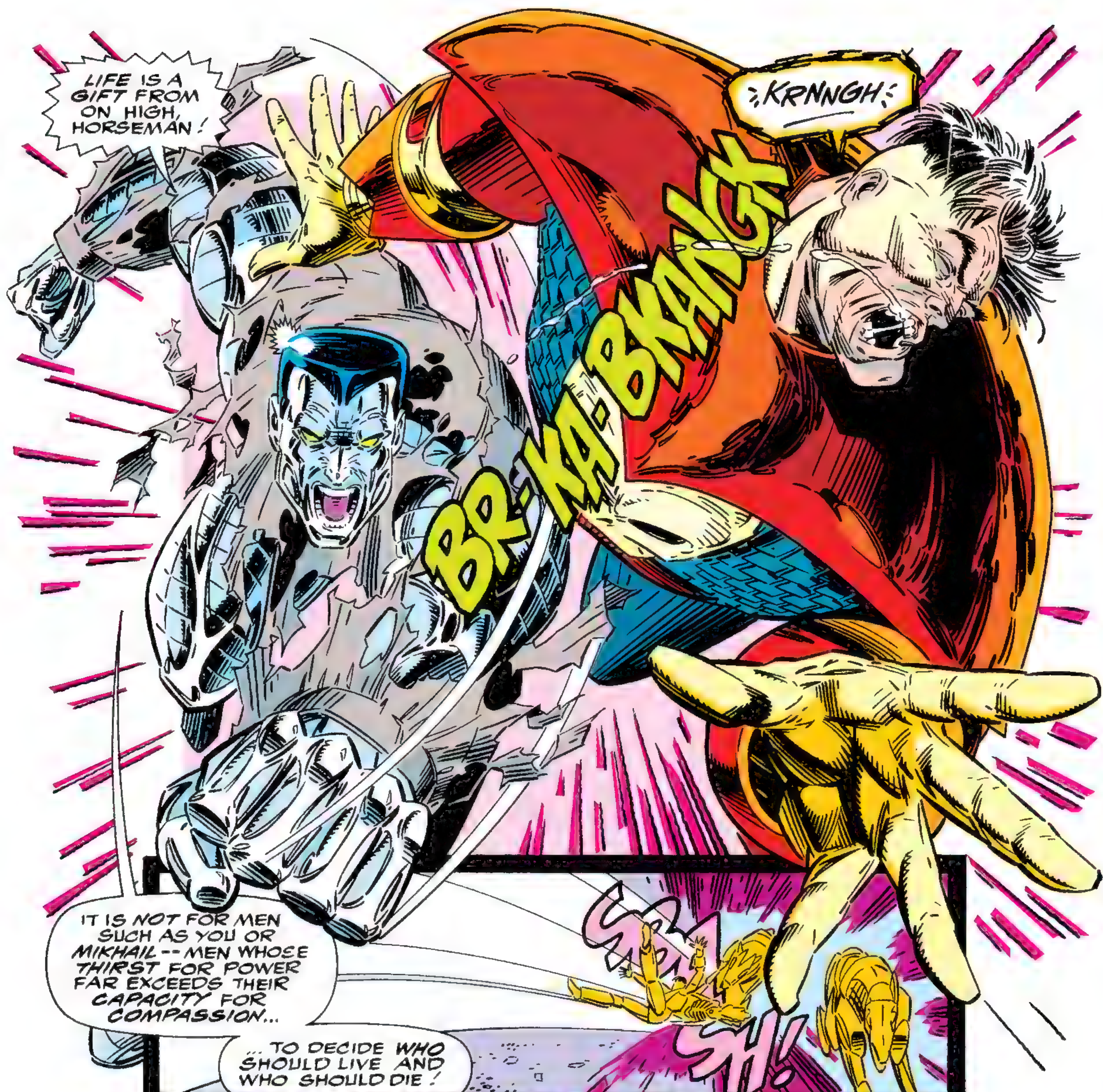
I AM...

DEATH!

BRTHOOM!

JEAN!





CENTRAL PARK,
WHERE MUSIC
HAS BEEN
REPLACED BY
MAYHEM--

WARREN?
AN IMAGE
INDUCER...?

KLIK

CABLE!

WE SHOULD HAVE
TAKEN YOU DOWN
AFTER YOU SHANG-
HAIED YOUR FIRST
NEW MUTANT--

-- BUT THE PRO-
FESSOR BELIEVED
THEY'D COME TO
THEIR SENSES ON
THEIR OWN.

NOT HIS
FIRST MISTAKE,
ARCHANGEL.

GUARANTEE
IT'S HIS LAST.

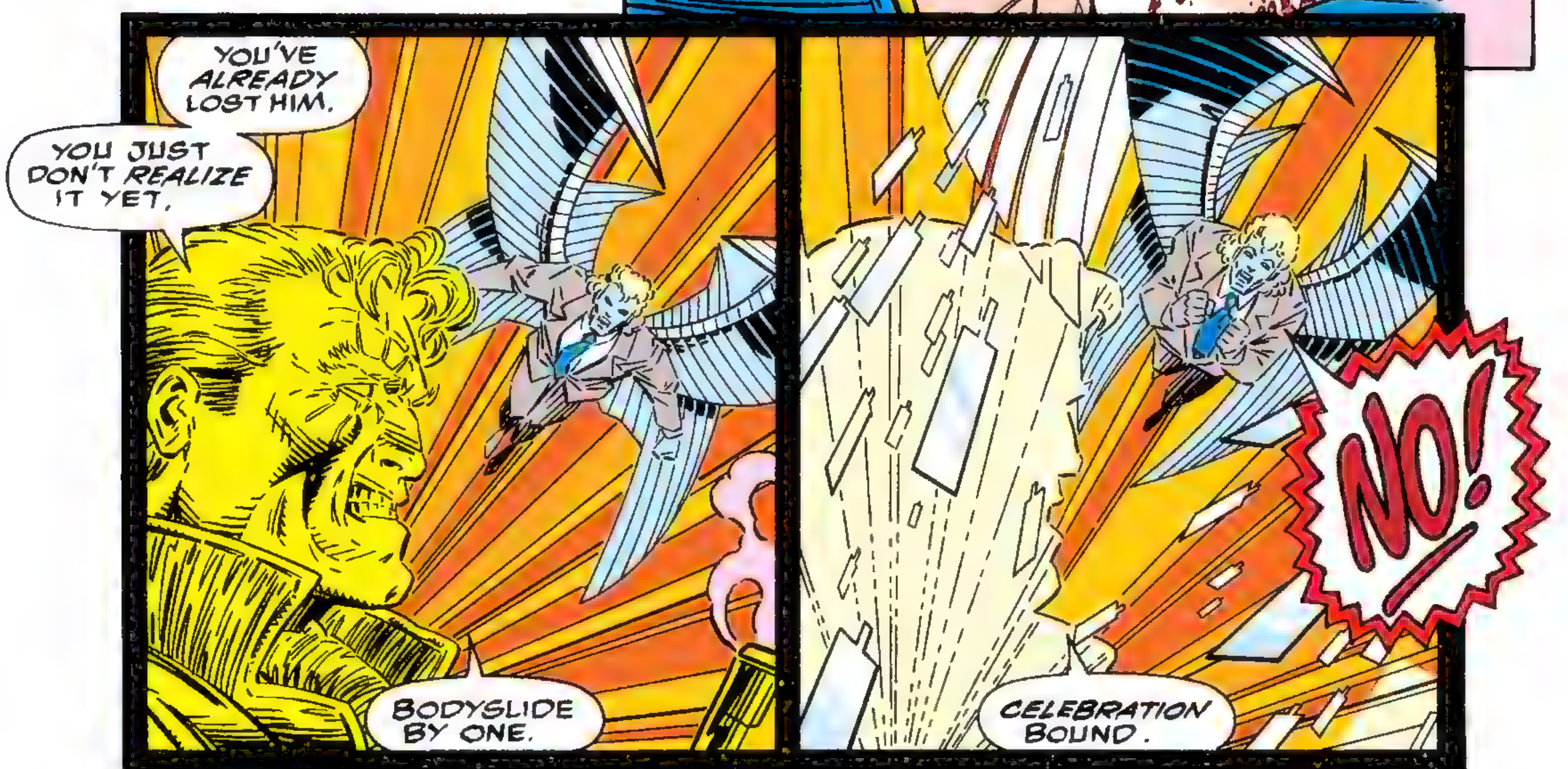
SCREEPTK!

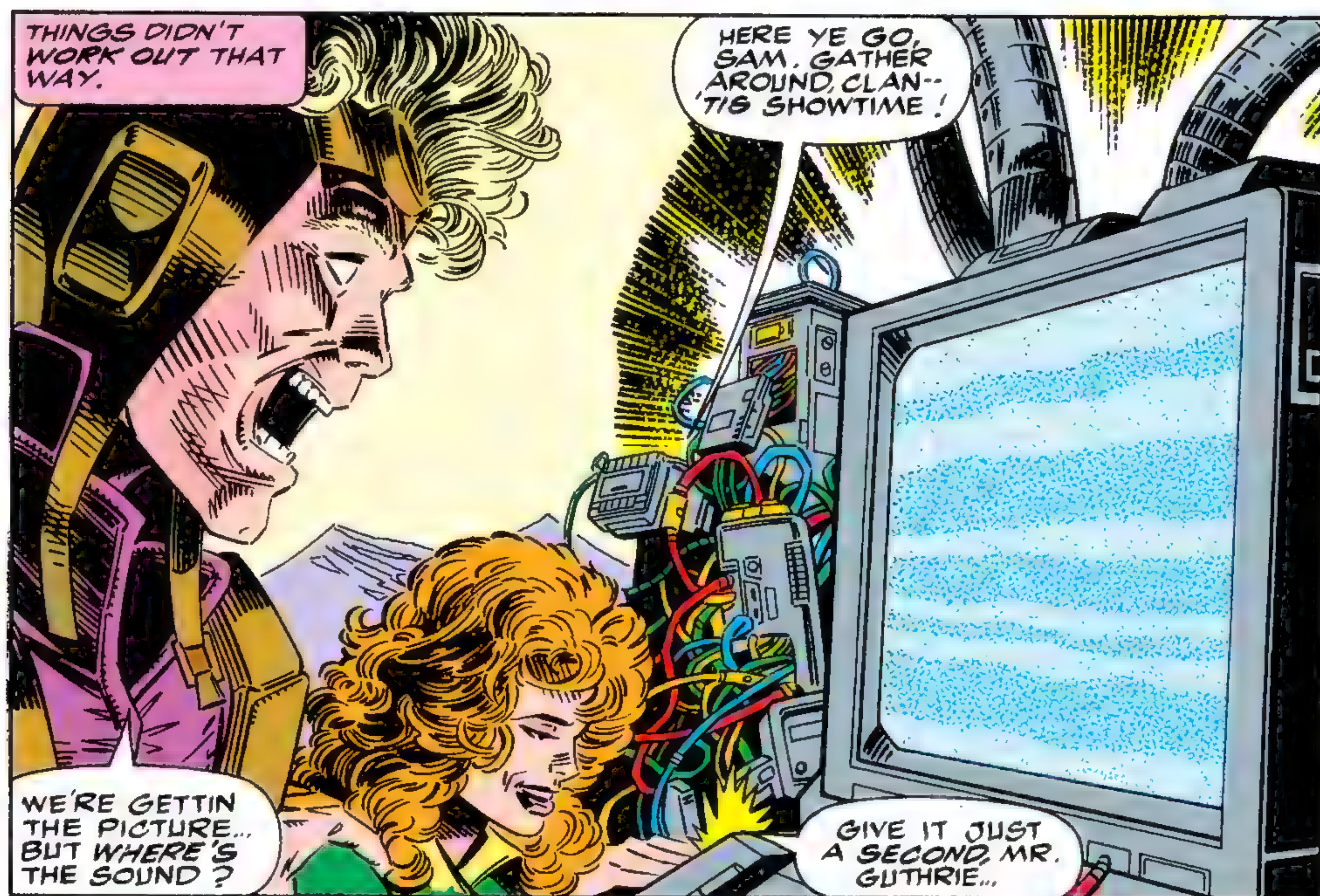
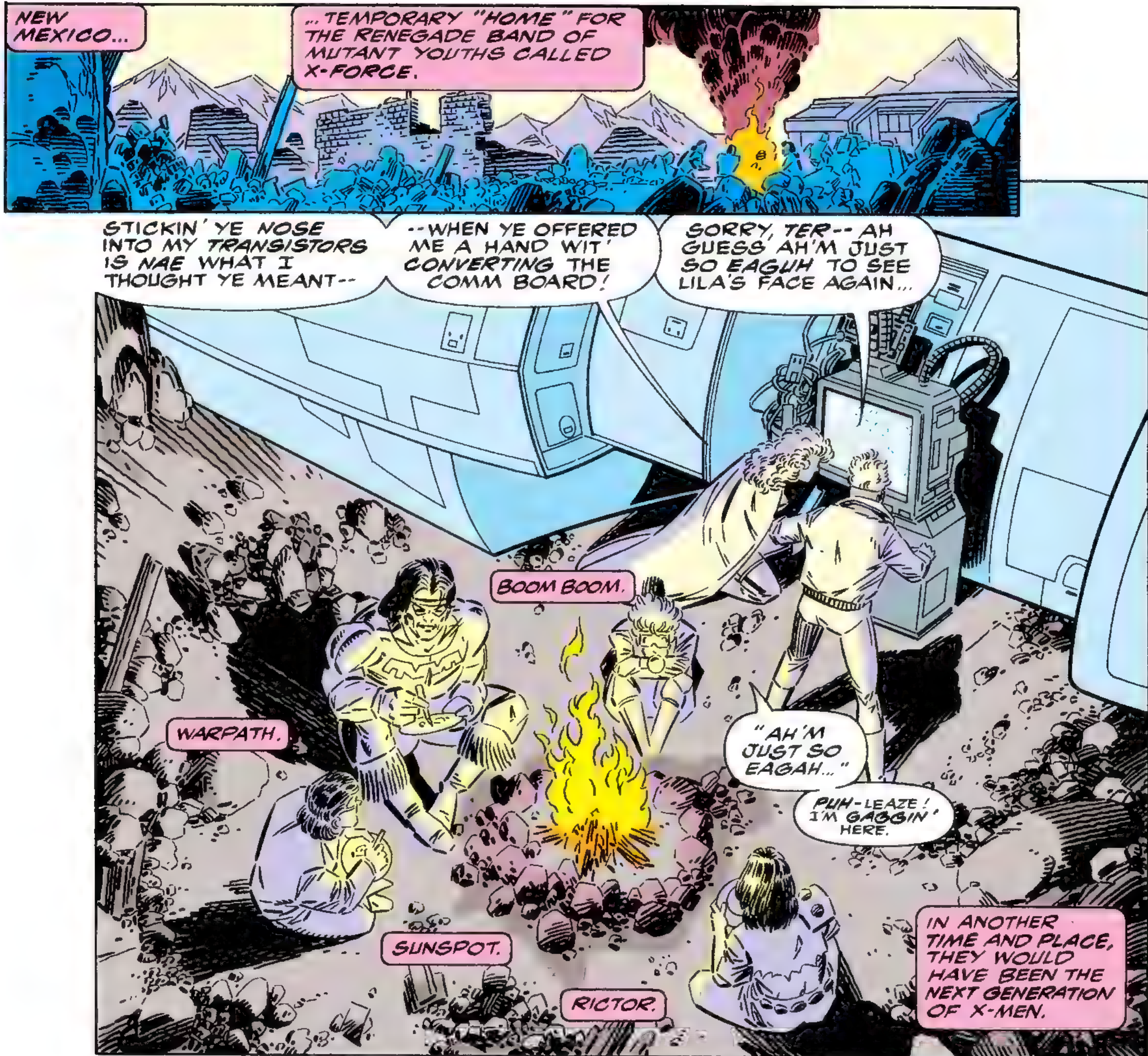
YAUH!

HURTS--
BUT THEY'LL
HEAL.

GOIN' TO
HAVE TO
DO--

--BETTER
THAN THAT...

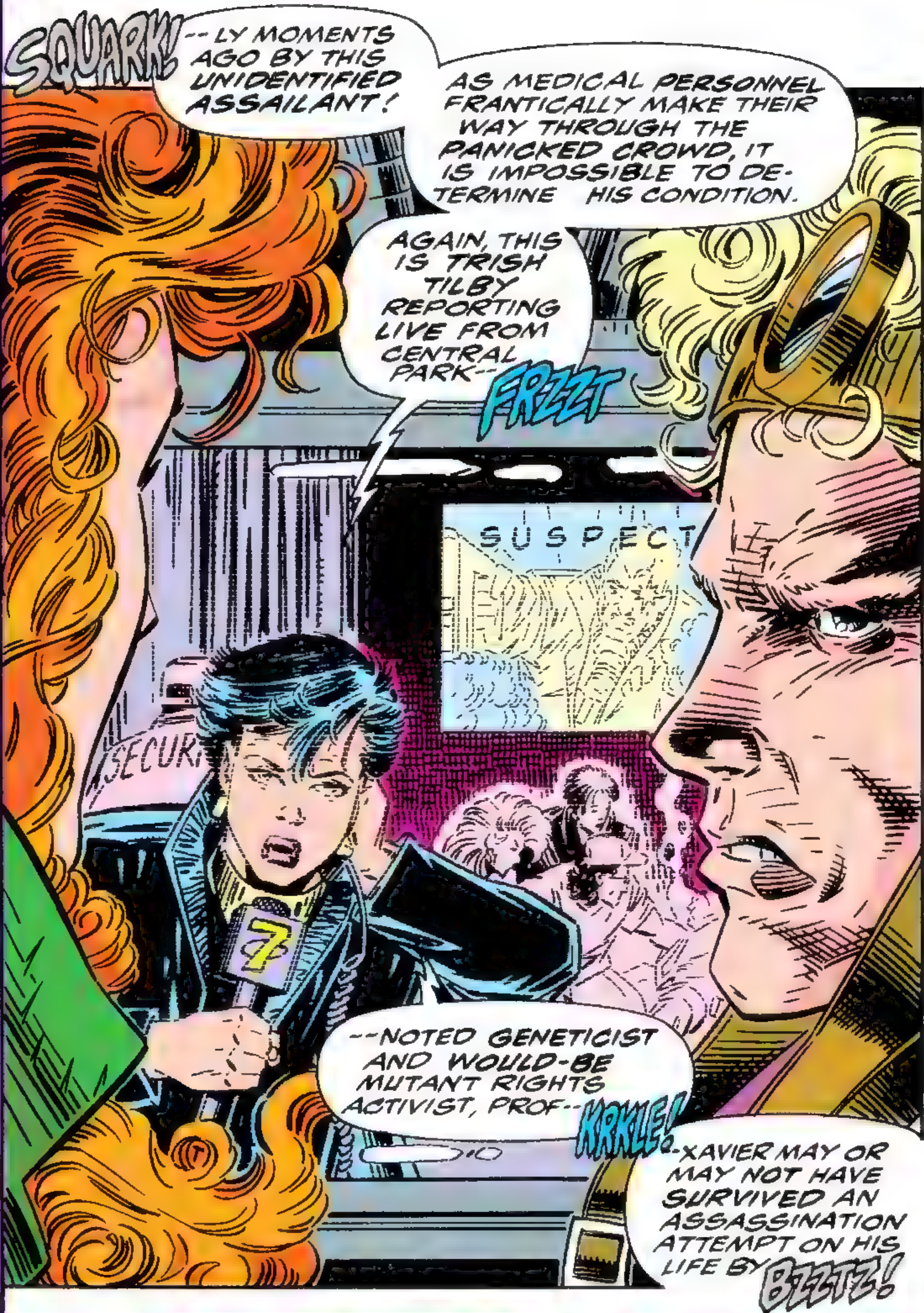






EVEN WITHOUT THE WORDS...

...I THINK WE ALL GET THE BASIC IDEA.



SQUARK!

--LY MOMENTS AGO BY THIS UNIDENTIFIED ASSAILANT!

AS MEDICAL PERSONNEL FRANTICALLY MAKE THEIR WAY THROUGH THE PANICKED CROWD, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE HIS CONDITION.

AGAIN, THIS IS TRISH TILBY REPORTING LIVE FROM CENTRAL PARK--

FRZZT

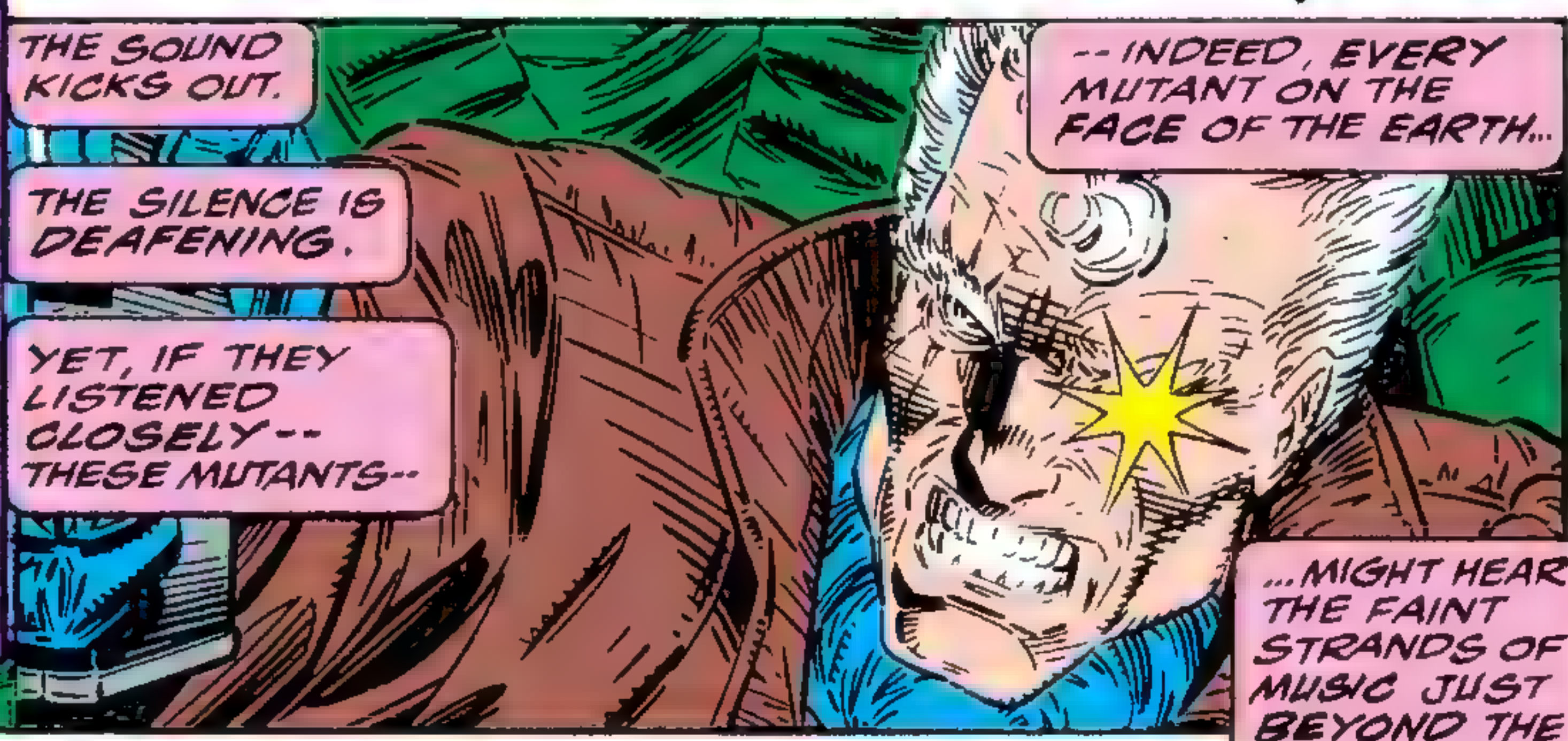
SUSPECT

--NOTED GENETICIST AND WOULD-BE MUTANT RIGHTS ACTIVIST, PROF--

KRKLE!

--XAVIER MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE SURVIVED AN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON HIS LIFE BY--

BZZT!



THE SOUND KICKS OUT.

THE SILENCE IS DEAFENING.

YET, IF THEY LISTENED CLOSELY-- THESE MUTANTS--

--INDEED, EVERY MUTANT ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH...

...MIGHT HEAR THE FAINT STRANDS OF MUSIC JUST BEYOND THE HORIZON.

SWITCH OFF CERE BRO!

DRYDOCK THE BLACKBIRD!

LOCK THE DANGER ROOM DOOR!


THE EXECUTIONER'S SONG HAS BEGUN.

FROM HERE ON, IT'S MANIC MUTANT MANIA IN THE MIGHTY MARVEL MANNER AS WE CONTINUE WHAT WE'RE BETTING IS THE HOTTEST CROSSOVER EVER--

JOIN US IN **X-FACTOR #84**

ON SALE NEXT WEEK--FOR CHAPTER #2!

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COMICS



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X-CUTIONER'S SONG

PART 2



Stein + MILGROM

AN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON PROFESSOR XAVIER HAS LEFT HIS LIFE IN GREAT JEOPARDY. MEANWHILE, SCOTT SUMMERS AND JEAN GREY HAVE BEEN ABDUCTED BY THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF APOCALYPSE!

- CUTIONER'S SONG

I DON'T SEE WHERE WE HAVE A CHOICE, SHATTERSTAR.

WE ALL SAW CABLE IN NEW YORK, SHOOTING DOWN XAVIER. WE HAVE TO GO AFTER HIM.

THERE'S NO GUARANTEE HE'S STILL IN NEW YORK BUT WHAT THERE MOST DEFINITELY WILL BE IS A CITY CRAWLING WITH X-MEN LOOKING FOR ANYONE CONNECTED WITH CABLE...

...PARTICULARLY X-FORCE!

IT'S SUICIDE. EVEN WORSE... IT'S POOR STRATEGY.

MY MAJOR CONCERN IS THE IPAC.

IT'S BEING HELD TOGETHER WITH SPIT AND BAILING WIRE. NOT A RELIABLE GETAWAY FROM A CITY THAT'S TURNING INTO A MUTANT SHOOTING GALLERY.

SAM? YOU'RE THE LEADER. WHAT DO YOU THINK?

AH SAY WE GO. WE OWE IT TO CABLE TO REIN HIM IN IF HE'S NUTS. AND IF HE'S HURT THE PROF, WE OWE IT TO XAVIER.

BUT YOU'RE STAYIN' HERE, 'BERTO.

NO! YOU CAN'T LEAVE ME BEH--

--UNHHH--

EASY, ROBERTO, I GOT YOU.

NO OFFENSE, 'BERTO, BUT YOU'RE HURT SO BAD Y'COULD BARELY GET OUTTA BED, MUCH LESS BE OF USE IN A FIGHT.

TERRY, YA GOT TWENTY MINUTES TO GET ONE OF THE MONITORS OUT OF THE IPAC.

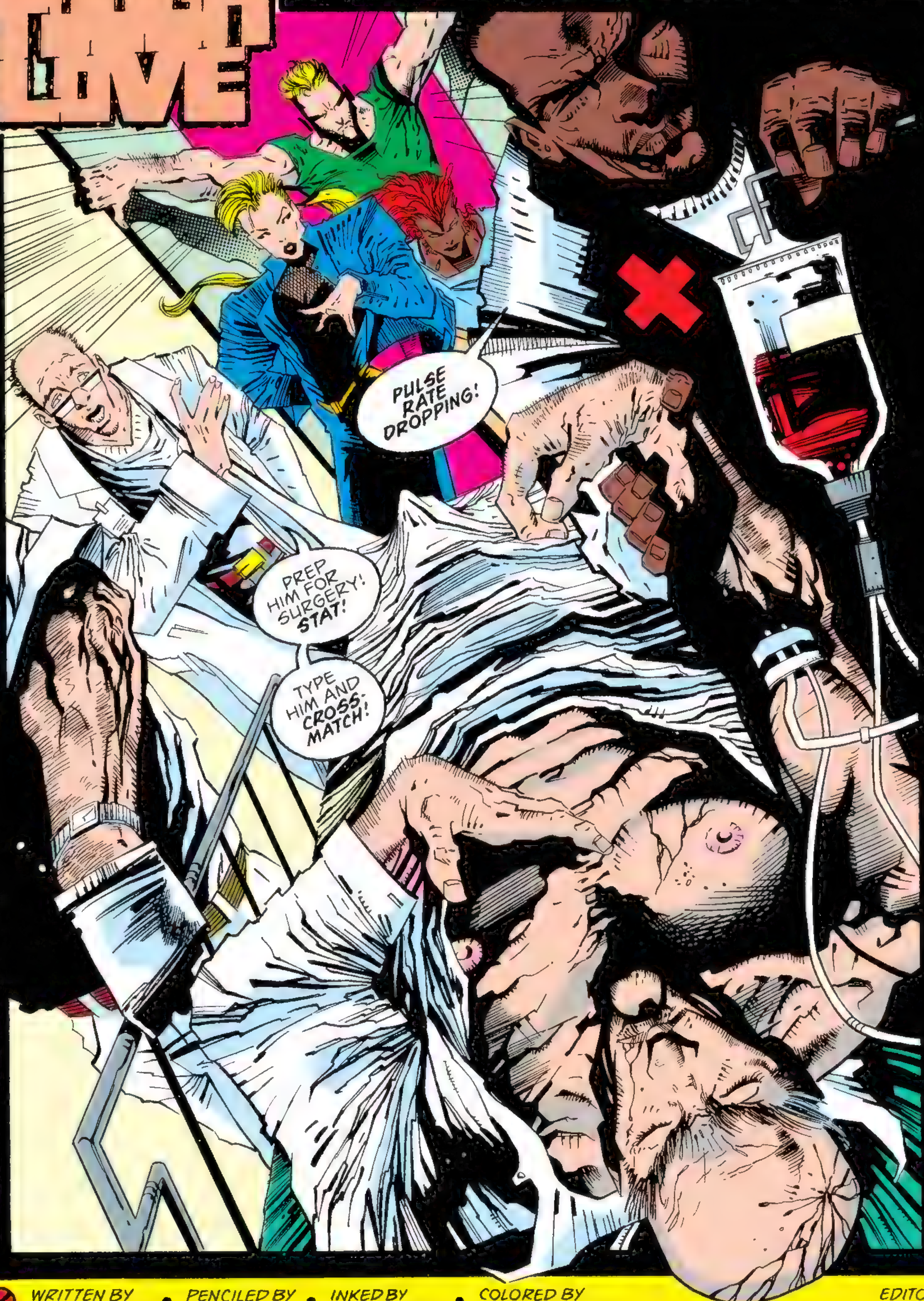
BOOMER, RIC AND FERAL WILL COME WITH ME.

THE REST OF Y'ALL, WATCH THE NEWS REPORTS ON THE MONITOR.

IF WE'RE NAILED, IT'LL BE UP TO Y'ALL TO SAVE OUR BUTTS.

* NOTE TO THE WISE: IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY READ UNCANNY X-MEN # 294 NOW IS THE TIME TO DO SO. -- KELLY

LOVE



WRITTEN BY
PETER DAVID

PENCILED BY
JAE LEE

INKED BY
AL MILGROM

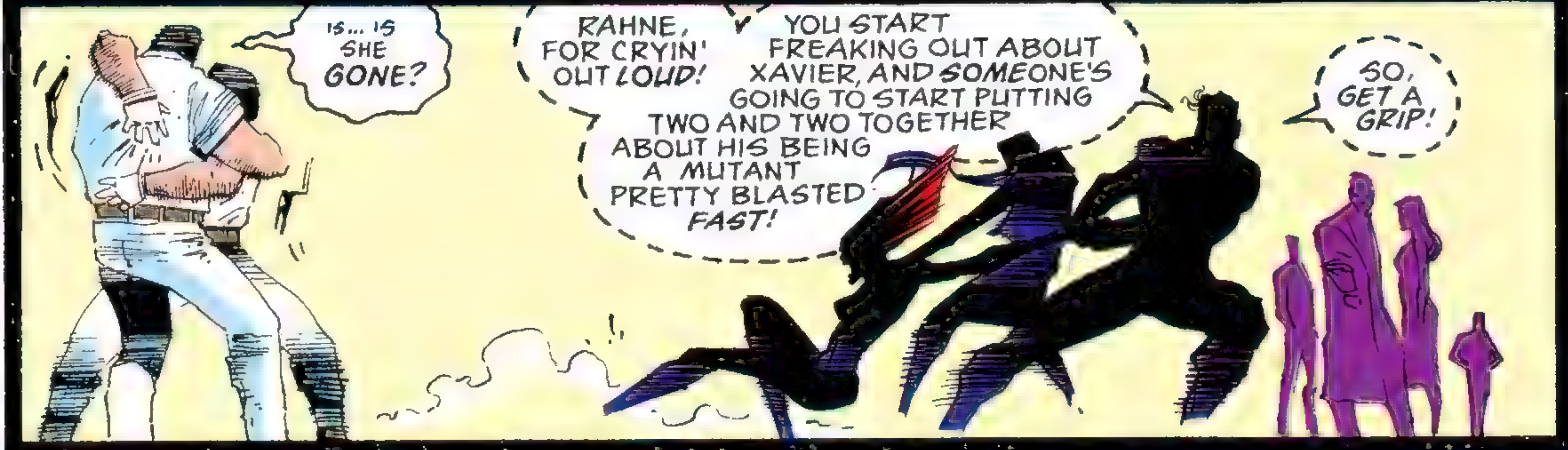
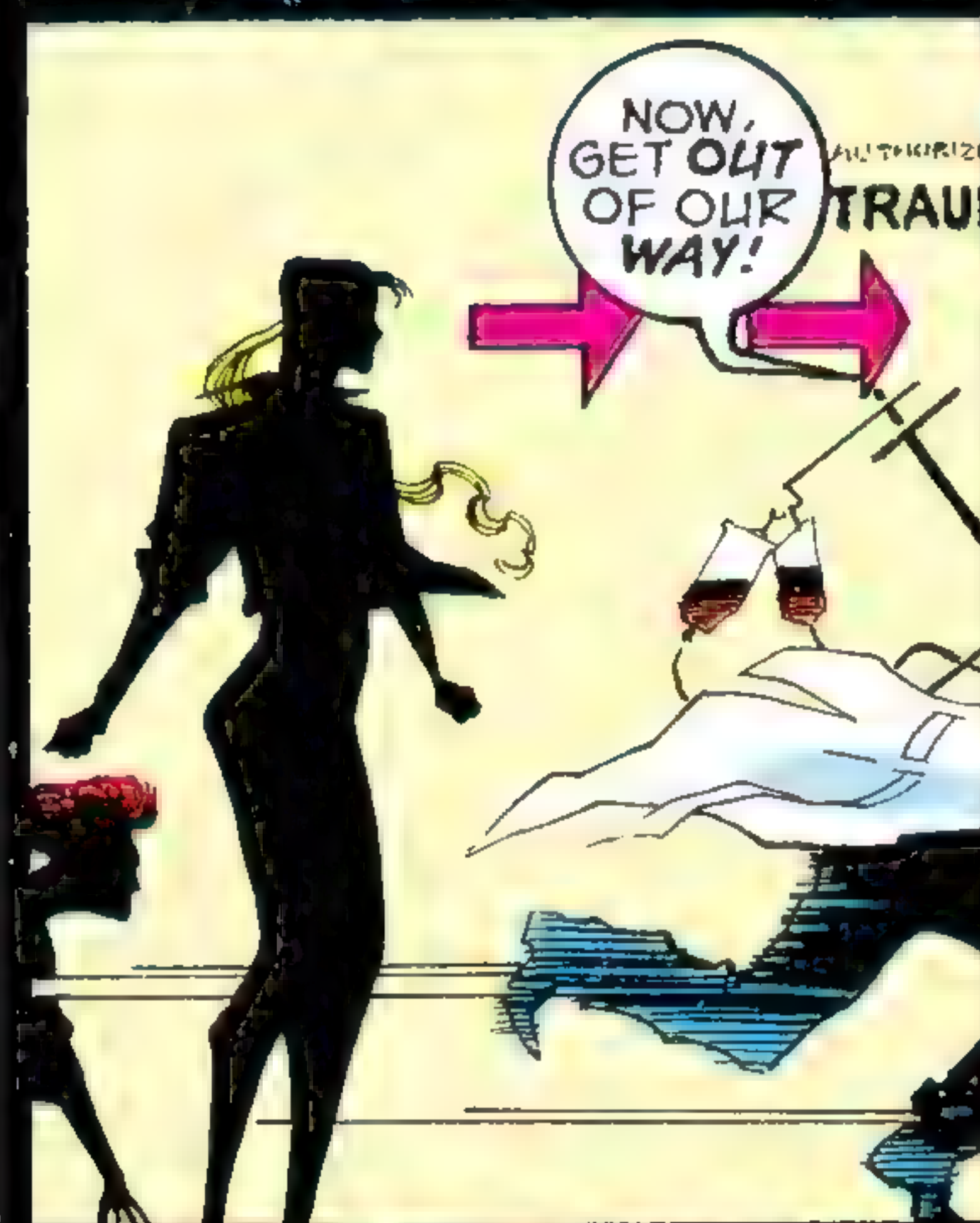
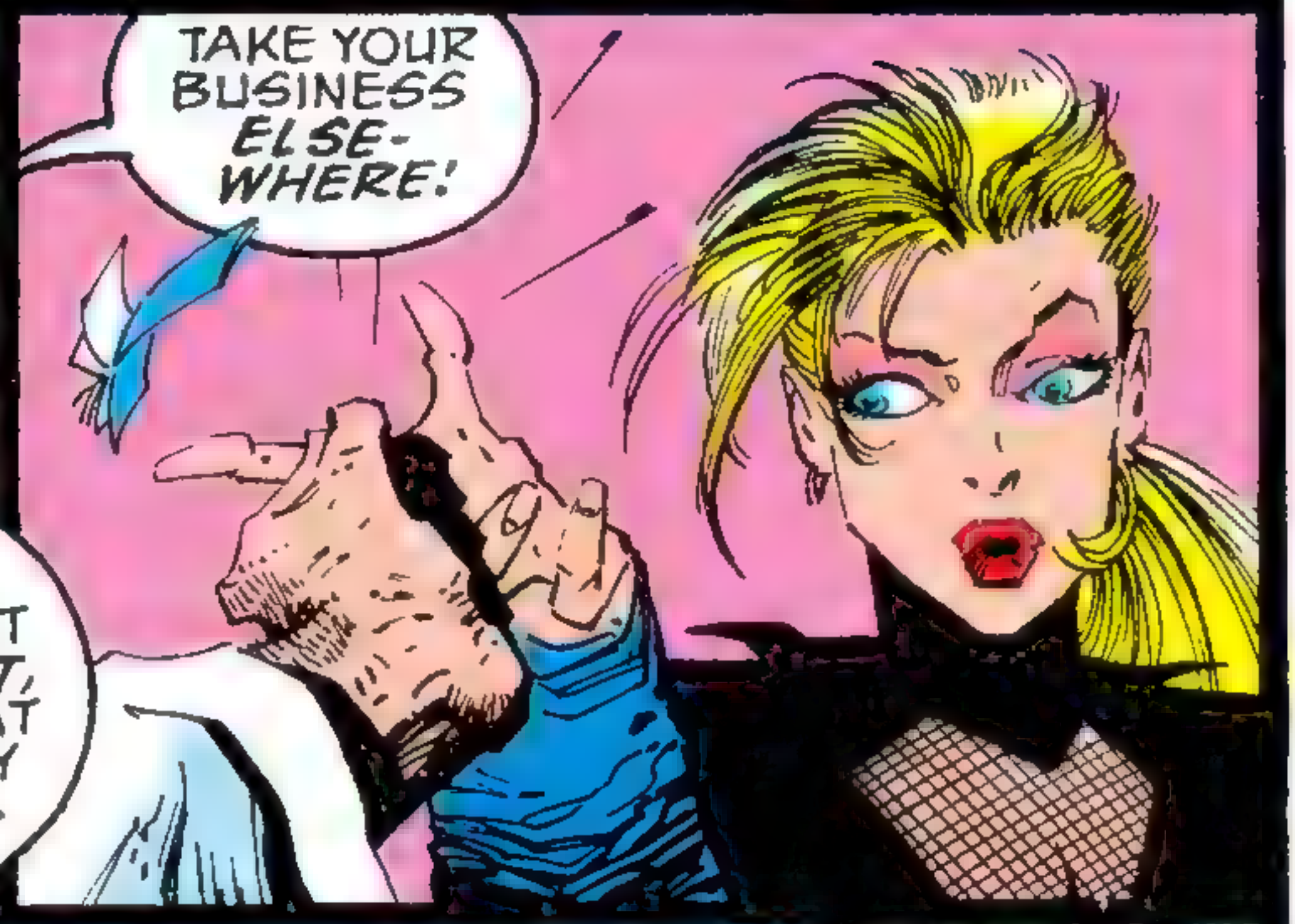
COLORED BY
BRAD VANCATA

LETTERED BY
RICHARD STARKINGS

EDITOR
KELLY CORVESE

GROUP EDITOR
BOB HARRAS

EDITOR
IN
CHIEF
TOM
DEFALCO





ORORO.

ALEX.

WISH IT COULD HAVE BEEN UNDER **BETTER** CIRCUMSTANCES. SEEING YOU, I MEAN.

I KNOW WHAT YOU MEANT.

Ah.

Um... WHO'S YOUR FRIEND?

THIS IS **BISHOP**. BISHOP, THIS IS ALEX, VALERIE, AND RAHNE.



WHAT IS THE PROFESSOR'S CONDITION?

HE'S BEEN BROUGHT INTO SURGERY.

WHERE ARE THE REST OF YOUR, UH... ASSOCIATES?

I HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH AS **MANY** AS I COULD CONTACT QUICKLY. THE NEWS WILL SPREAD RATHER **RAPIDLY**, I WOULD THINK. BAD NEWS OFTEN DOES.

INDEED.



AND YOUR "ASSOCIATES?"

MOST OF THEM ARE UPSTAIRS WITH A YOUNG... **MUTANT**... WHO WAS BEATEN UP YES-TERDAY.

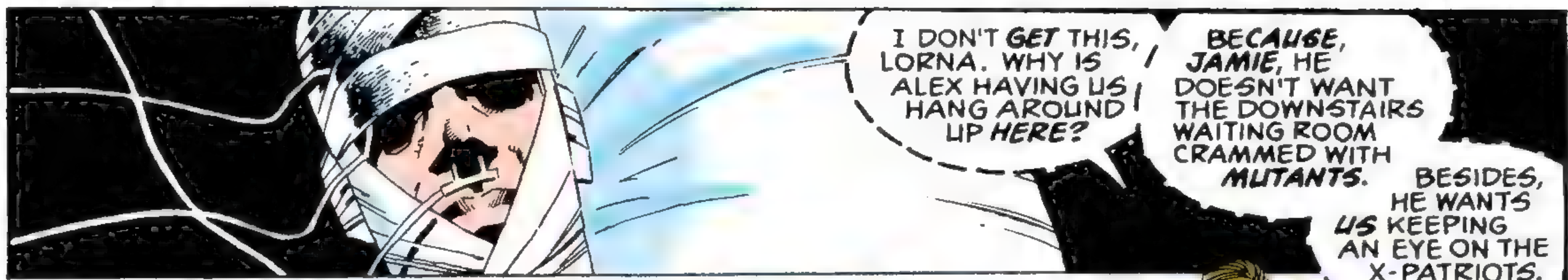
Oh, YES. I SAW THE VIDEOTAPE ON THE NEWS. IT WAS **HORRIBLE**.

YEAH. BUT **JAMIE** ROUNDED UP THE PERPS AND THEY'RE BEING CHARGED WITH ASSAULT AND BATTERY. MAYBE WE'LL **FINALLY** SEE SOME JUSTICE.



SO NOW WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT THE PROFESSOR?

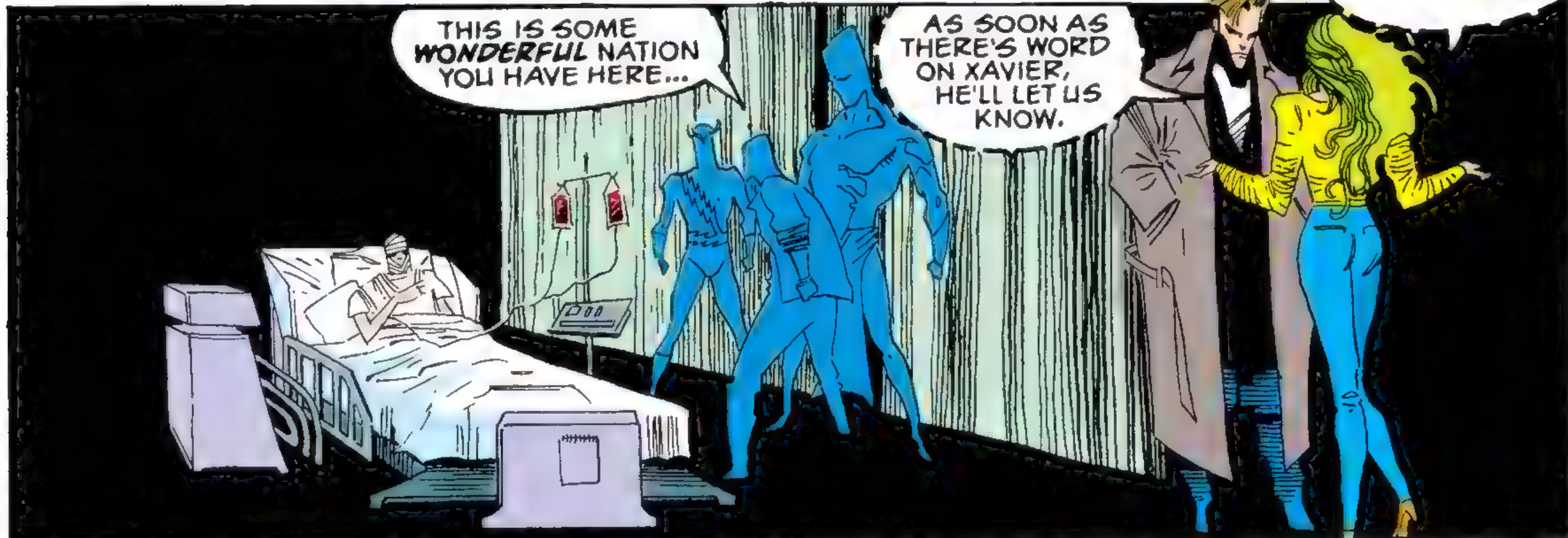
WE WAIT.



I DON'T GET THIS, LORNA. WHY IS ALEX HAVING US HANG AROUND UP HERE?

BECAUSE, JAMIE, HE DOESN'T WANT THE DOWNSTAIRS WAITING ROOM CRAMMED WITH MUTANTS.

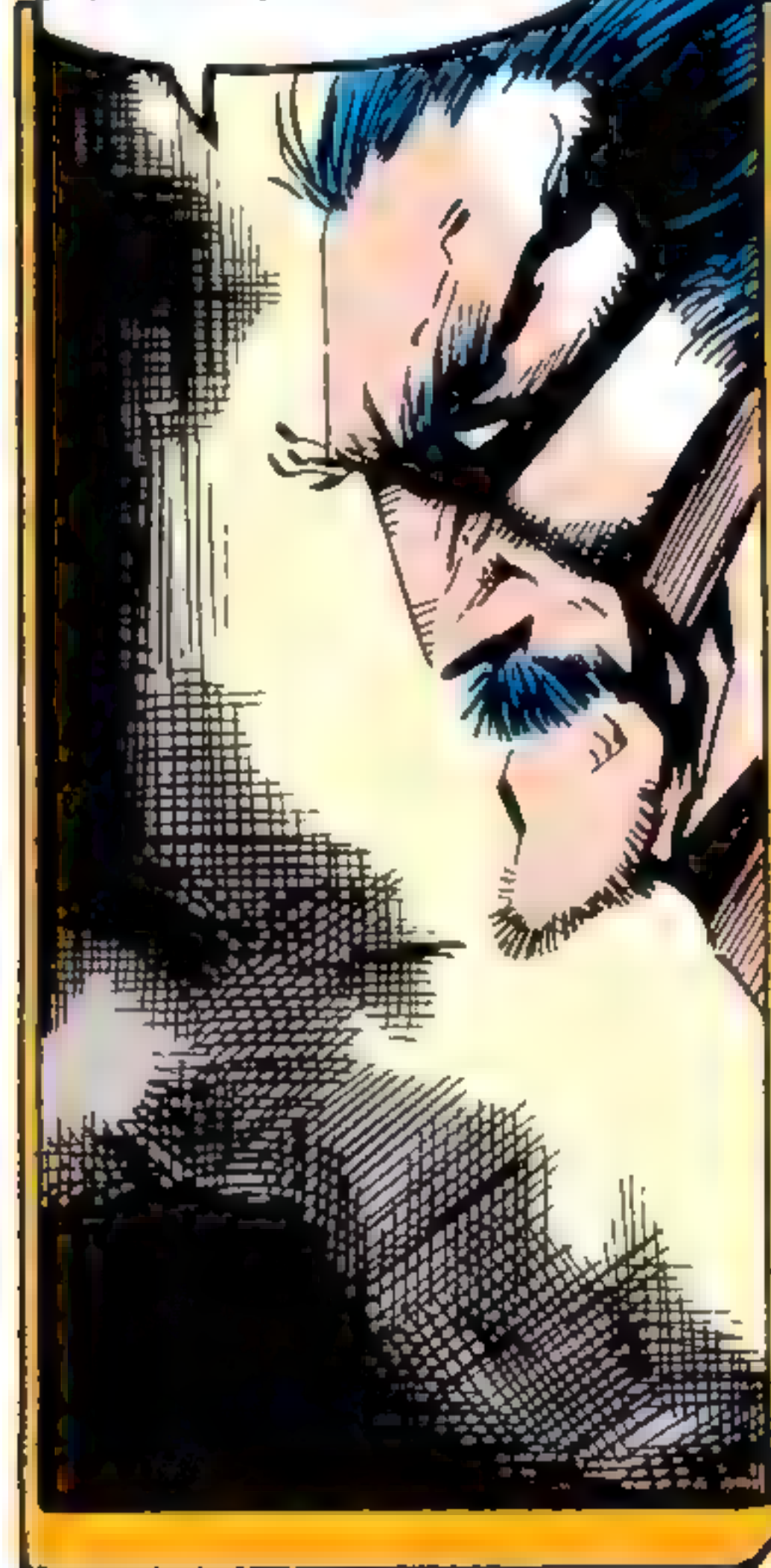
BESIDES, HE WANTS US KEEPING AN EYE ON THE X-PATRIOTS.



THIS IS SOME WONDERFUL NATION YOU HAVE HERE...

AS SOON AS THERE'S WORD ON XAVIER, HE'LL LET US KNOW.

...WE FLED GENOSHA TO ESCAPE ANTI-MUTANT OPPRESSION.



THIS IS THE **WRONG** COUNTRY TO COME TO. NOT ONLY IS YOUNG TAYLOR THE VICTIM OF MINDLESS ANTI-MUTANT HYSTERIA...

... BUT ALL XAVIER HAD TO DO WAS **SHOW UP** AT A CONCERT FOR "BROTHERHOOD," AND HE WAS SHOT.

I WAS THERE WHEN XAVIER AND MY FATHER, MAGNETO, FIRST BUTTED HEADS OVER HUMANITY. HOW **NAUSEATING** TO THINK MAGNETO'S VIEW SEEMS BORNE OUT.

NOW COME ON, PIETRO, YOU'RE NOT SAYING MAGNETO IS **RIGHT**?

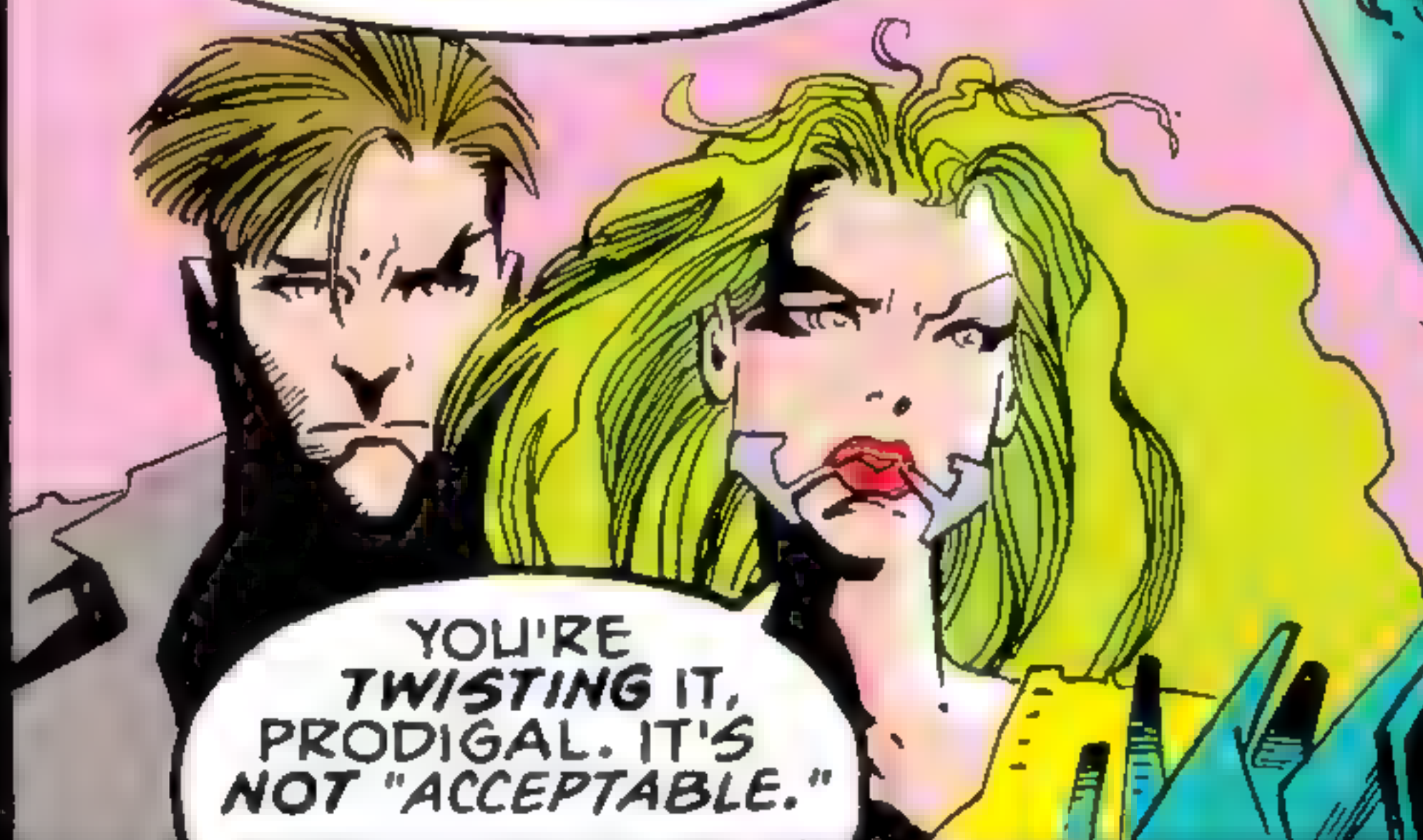
THE VERY THOUGHT OF MAGNETO **REPELS** ME, LORNA, BUT...

NO "BUT." IT'S NOT HUMANS VERSUS MUTANTS

AFTER ALL, THERE HAVE BEEN PLENTY OF "NORMS" WHO HAVE MET WITH VIOLENCE OR DEATH, SIMPLY BECAUSE OF WHAT THEY **WERE** OR WHAT THEY **BELIEVED**.

I SEE, MS. DANE.

HUMAN BRUTALITY TOWARDS **MUTANTS** IS ACCEPTABLE BECAUSE IT'S **EQUITABLE**.



YOU'RE **TWISTING** IT, PRODIGAL. IT'S NOT "ACCEPTABLE."

NO, IT'S **NOT**. AND HOW MUCH MORE DO WE TAKE UNTIL WE START LETTING PEOPLE KNOW THAT WE'LL TAKE **NO MORE**??!

DOWNSTAIRS...

'LEX!
JO BETH
AND I JUST
HEARD!

HOW
IS HE?

JUST
HEARD?!

IT'S TWO
A.M! I'VE BEEN
TRYING TO RAISE
YOU **ALL NIGHT** ON
THE HEADSET!

WHY
THE **BLAZES**
DIDN'T YOU
RESPOND,
GUIDO?
WHERE'VE YOU
BEEEN?

I, UH, HAD
MY HEADSET
TURNED
OFF!

TURNUED OFF?
THAT UNIT'S SO
WE CAN GET IN
TOUCH WITH
YOU!
WHY--?

DID I,
CUP-
CAKE?

IT WAS AT
MY REQUEST.
I DIDN'T WANT
INTERRUPTIONS.

IT'S BEEN
HOURS SINCE
THEY BROUGHT
HIM IN! I'M
GOING **DAFT**
HERE, ALEX!

ALL THIS...
THIS ... THIS
JUST STANDING
ABOUT, AND...
AND...

OKAY!
OKAY,
LISTEN,
RAHNE.

I WANT
YOU TO
HEAD OUT
TO THE
BANDSTAND
IN CENTRAL
PARK, WHERE
THE **PROF**
WAS SHOT.

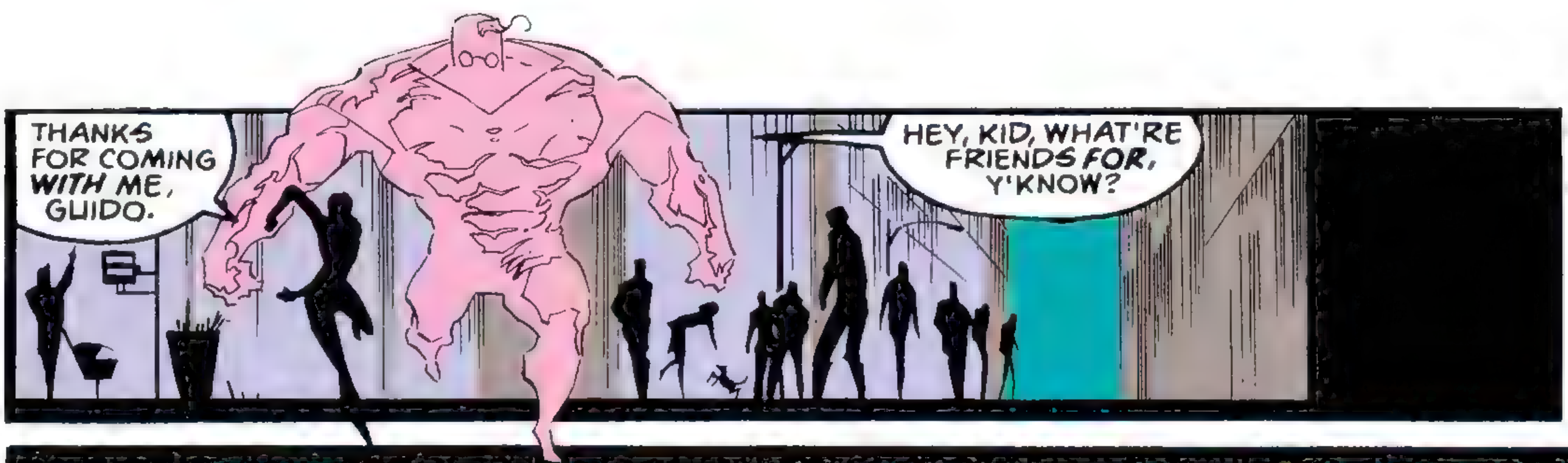
SEE IF YOU
CAN PICK UP ANY
CLUES AS TO
CABLE'S WHERE-
ABOUTS.

GUIDO,
GO WITH
HER.

WHY
ME?

BECAUSE
I **ORDERED**
YOU TO,
"CUPCAKE!"

OKAY. SO
LONG AS
THERE'S A
REASON.



THANKS
FOR COMING
WITH ME,
GUIDO.

HEY, KID, WHAT'RE
FRIENDS FOR,
Y'KNOW?



WHAT'S IT
ALL FOR?

FOR THE FIRST
TIME, THESE...
THESE THINGS
ON MY BACK
MIGHT'VE
DONE SOME
GOOD.

THEY
MIGHT HAVE
SAVED THE
PROFESSOR.
BUT THE GUN
BLEW A HOLE
RIGHT
THROUGH
THEM.

BEAUTIFUL.
I WAS COUNTING ON
APOCALYPSE'S TECHNOLOGY
TO SAVE A LIFE.



WELL, I'M NOT
COUNTING ON
ANYTHING
BESIDES MYSELF
FROM NOW ON!
MYSELF... AND
THE X-MEN!

FIRST
WE NAIL
CABLE! AND
AFTER WE
DO... IT'S
GOING TO
BE YOU,
APOCA-
LYPSE!

YOU AND
ME!

AND NOTHING WILL
SAVE YOU WHEN
THAT HAPPENS!

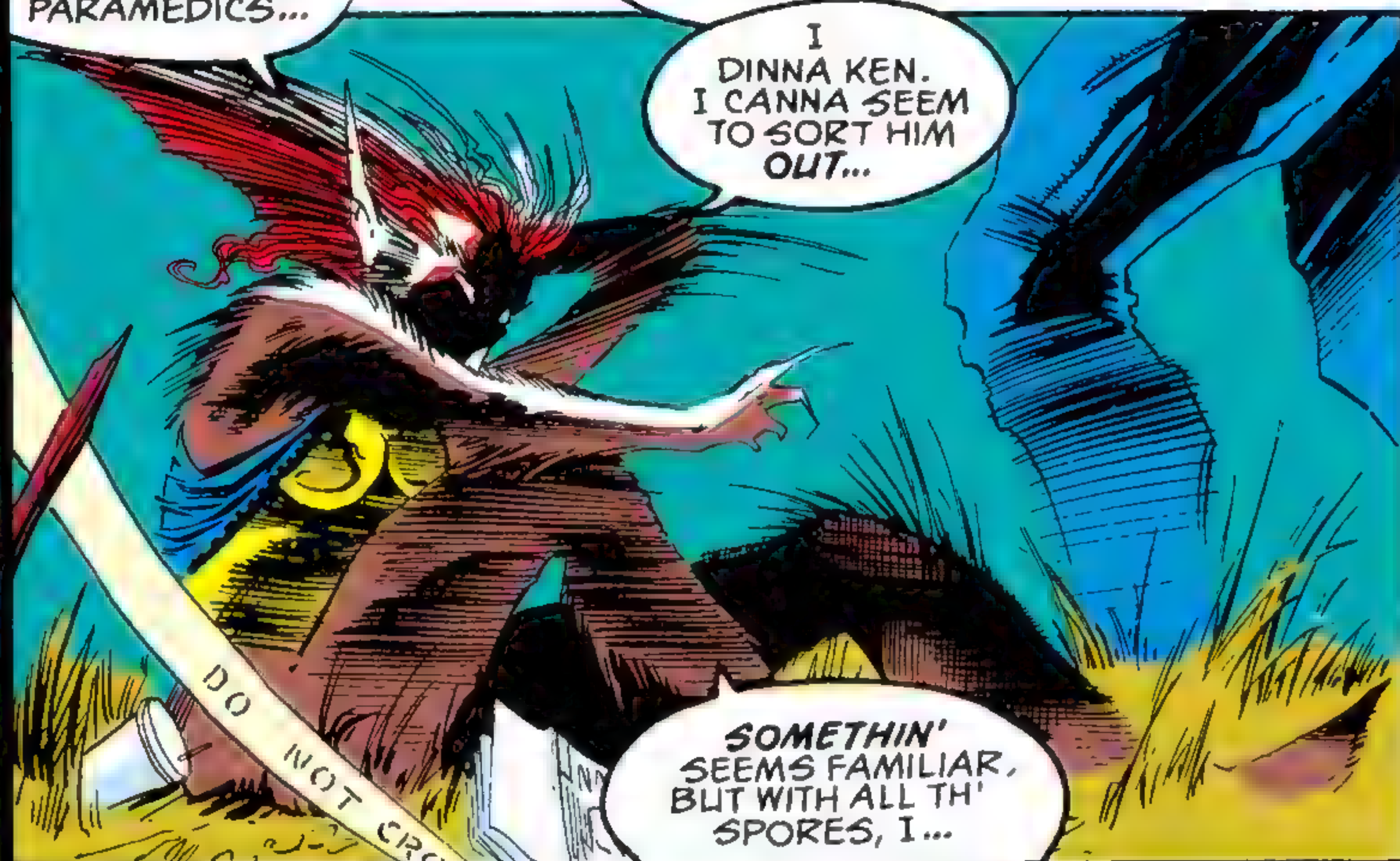
NOTHING!



... SEPARATED THEM FROM TH' PARAMEDICS...

WHAT ABOUT CABLE?

I DINNA KEN. I CANNA SEEM TO SORT HIM OUT...

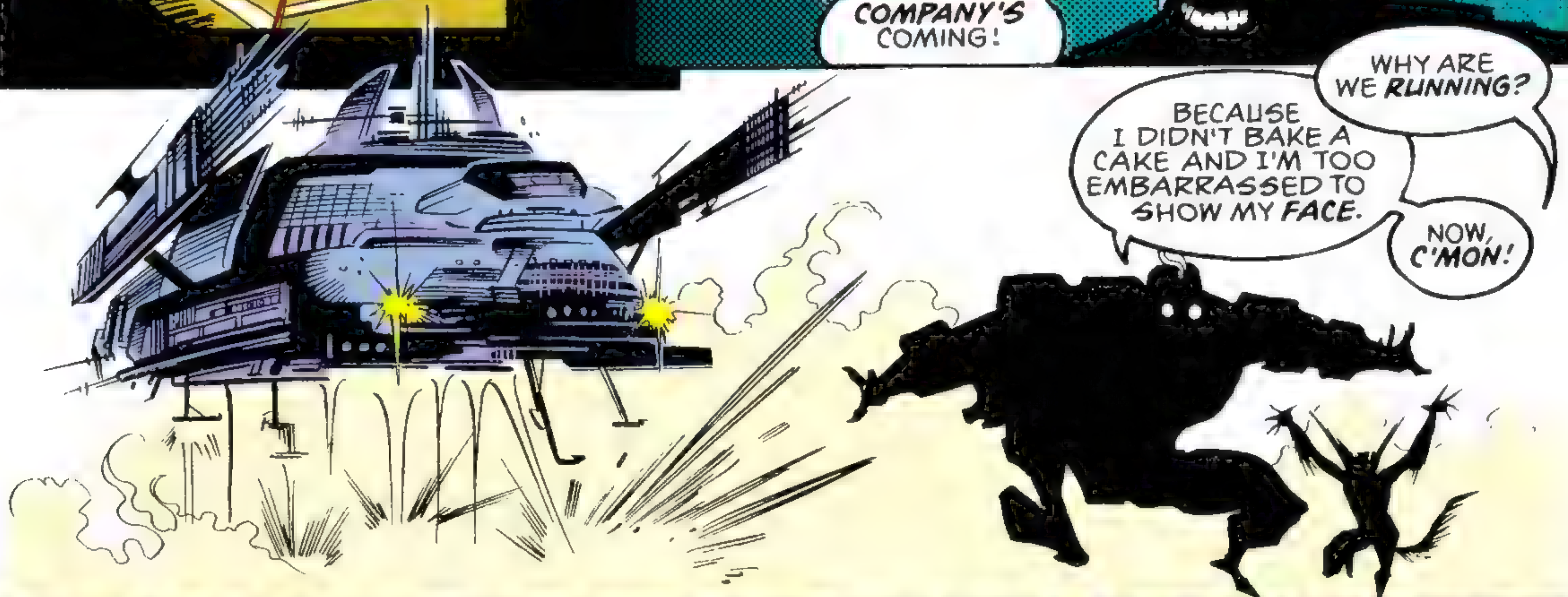


COMPANY'S COMING!

WHY ARE WE RUNNING?

BECAUSE I DIDN'T BAKE A CAKE AND I'M TOO EMBARRASSED TO SHOW MY FACE.

NOW, C'MON!

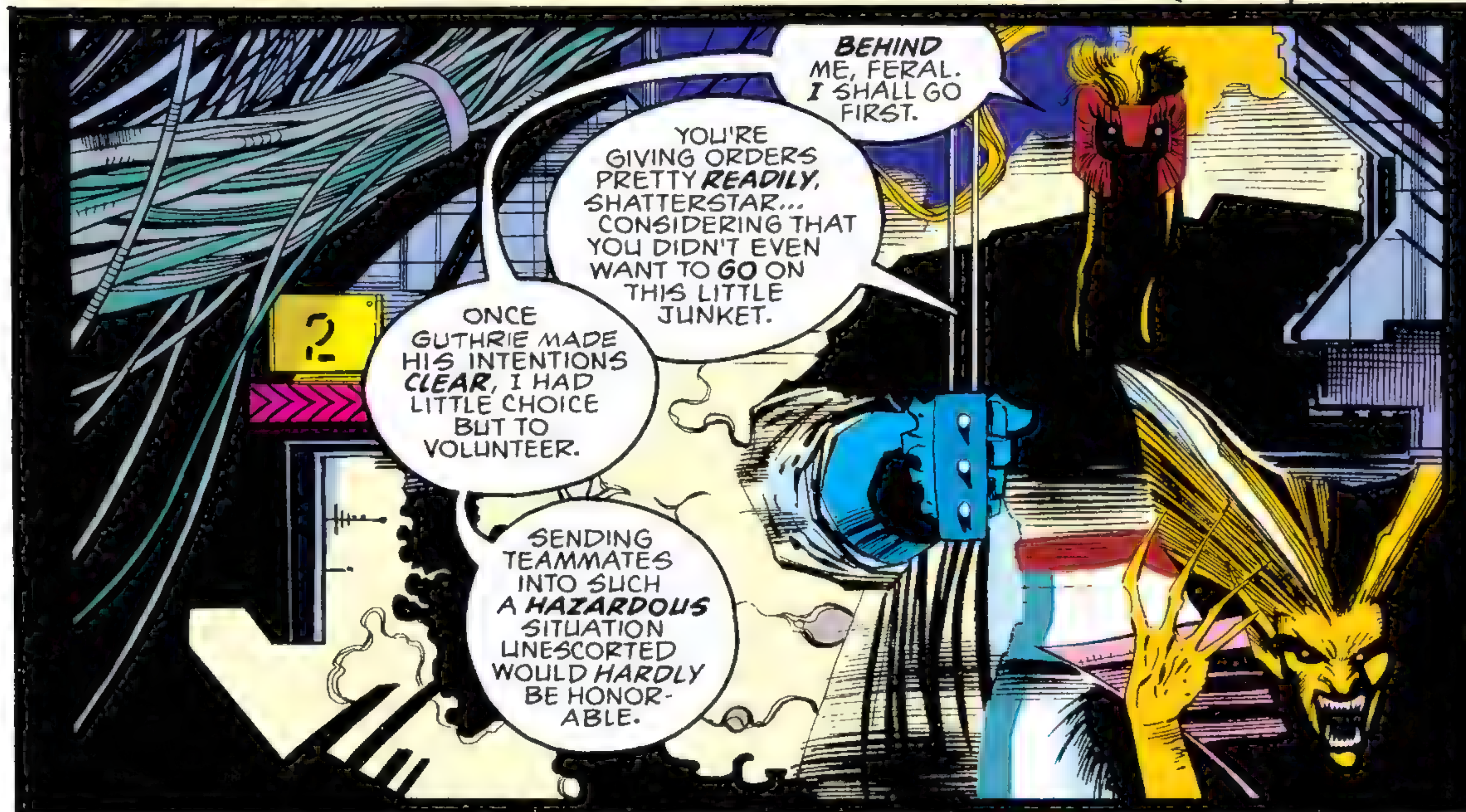


BEHIND ME, FERAL. I SHALL GO FIRST.

YOU'RE GIVING ORDERS PRETTY READILY, SHATTERSTAR... CONSIDERING THAT YOU DIDN'T EVEN WANT TO GO ON THIS LITTLE JUNKET.

ONCE GUTHRIE MADE HIS INTENTIONS CLEAR, I HAD LITTLE CHOICE BUT TO VOLUNTEER.

SENDING TEAMMATES INTO SUCH A HAZARDOUS SITUATION UNESCORTED WOULD HARDLY BE HONORABLE.

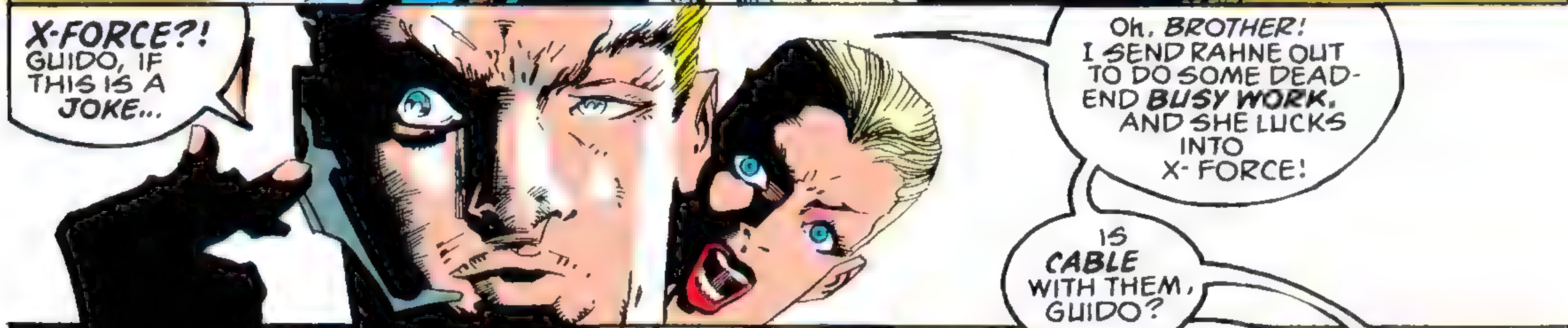




AW, MAN, IT'S THOSE X-FORCE BLOKS! NOW THEY SHOW UP!

ALEX! COME IN! THIS IS GUIDO!

'LEX? TERRIFIC! LISTEN, YOU WON'T BELIEVE WHO JUST DROPPED IN!

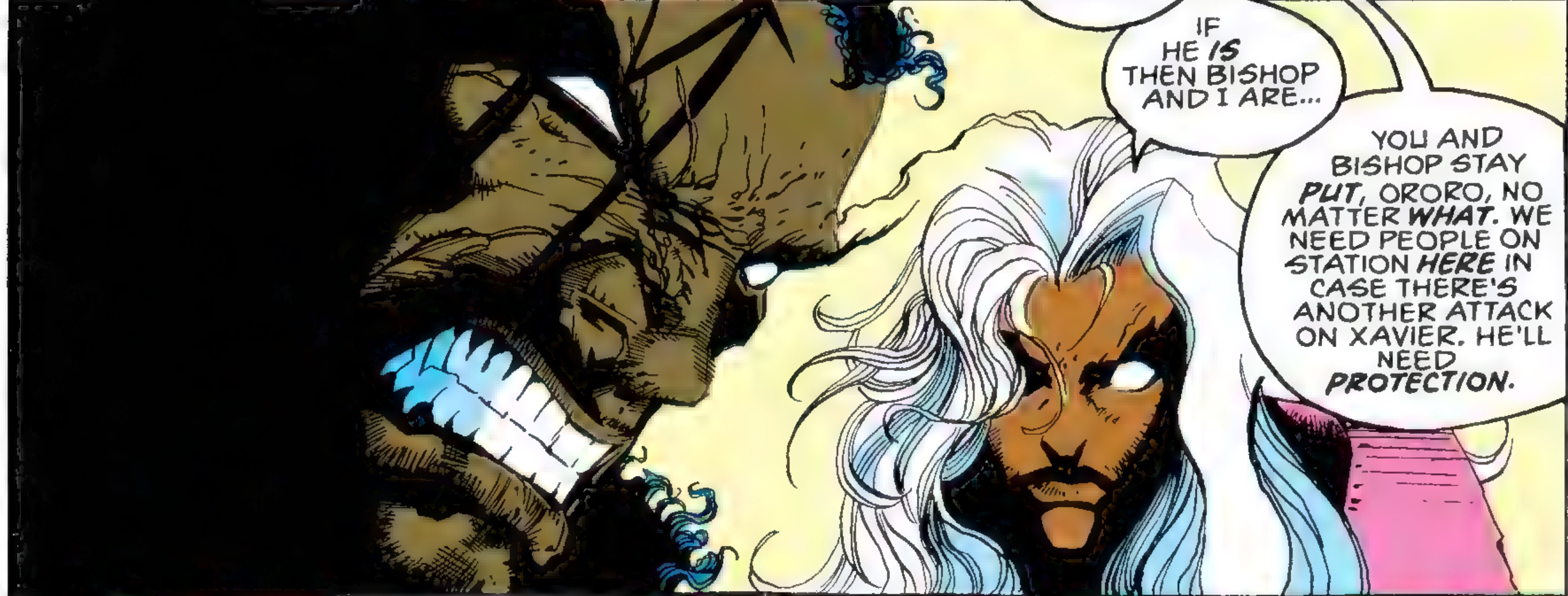


X-FORCE?! GUIDO, IF THIS IS A JOKE...

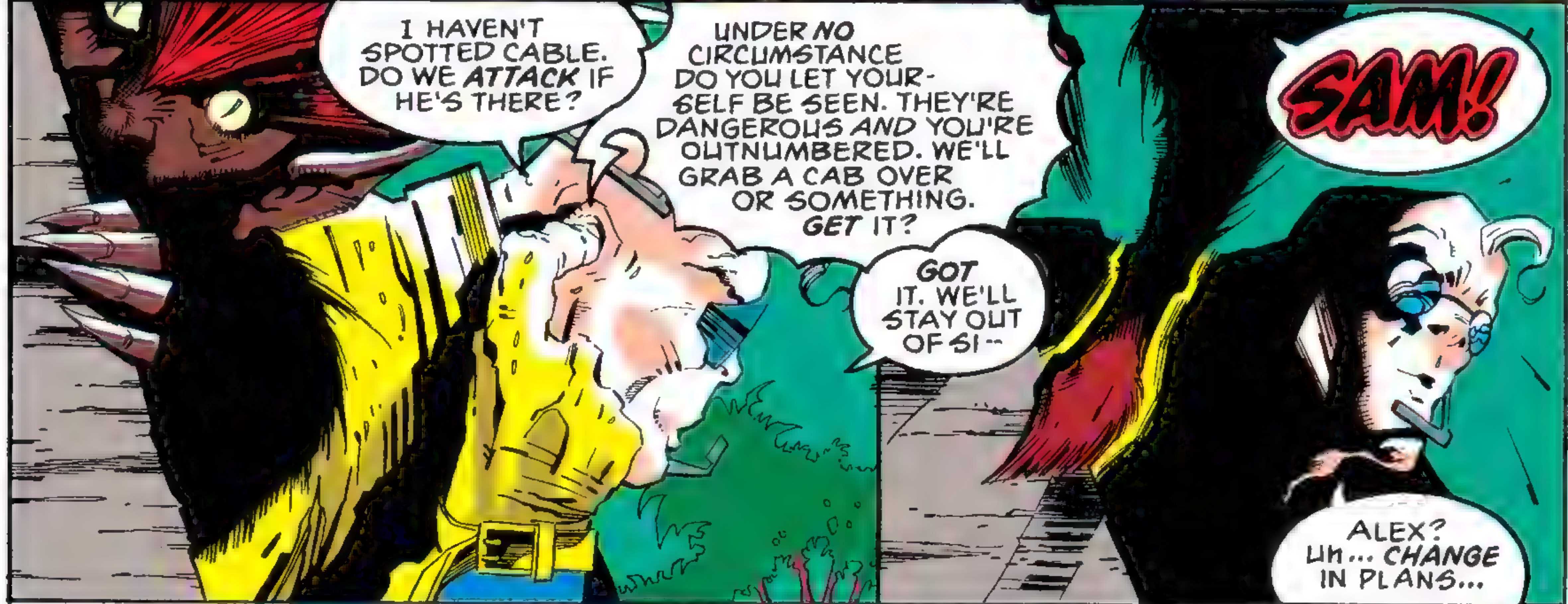
Oh, BROTHER! I SEND RAHNE OUT TO DO SOME DEAD-END **BUSY** WORK. AND SHE LUCKS INTO X-FORCE!

IS CABLE WITH THEM, GUIDO?

IF HE **IS** THEN BISHOP AND I ARE...



YOU AND BISHOP STAY PUT, OKORO, NO MATTER **WHAT**. WE NEED PEOPLE ON STATION **HERE** IN CASE THERE'S ANOTHER ATTACK ON XAVIER. HE'LL NEED **PROTECTION**.



I HAVEN'T SPOTTED CABLE. DO WE ATTACK IF HE'S THERE?

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCE DO YOU LET YOURSELF BE SEEN. THEY'RE DANGEROUS AND YOU'RE OUTNUMBERED. WE'LL GRAB A CAB OVER OR SOMETHING. GET IT?

GOT IT. WE'LL STAY OUT OF SI--

SAM!

ALEX? Uh... **CHANGE** IN PLANS...

FERAL!
LET HER
PASS.

SOMEHOW
AH HAD A
FEELIN' IF
WE RAN INTO
ANYONE, IT'D
BE HER.

I DON'T
LIKE HER
SMELL.

I
DON'T LIKE
YUUR FACE.
NOW MOVE IT,
SISTER.

SAM! I CANNA
BELIEVE IT! HE...
I THOUGHT YE
WERE DEAD.

WELL,
AH WAS...
... BUT AH
GOT BETTER.

HEY, KIDDO...
THE 'DO LOOKS
GOOD ON YA.

TABITHA! IT'S
LIKE A NEW
MUTANTS
REUNION!

I HEAR
YOU DON'T
THINK ABOUT
ME ANYMORE.

WHA--?

RICTOR!!
MFFFF...

MMM
MMMMMM
MMMMMM
MMM
M

Oww!
YOU...

... YOU
BIT ME!

I-I'M
SORRY, RIC!
I LOST MUH
HEAD. YE
GOT ME TOO
WORKED UP...

RAHNE... GETTING
WORKED UP?
WHAT NEXT...?
MOTHER TERESA
WORKING AT A
STRIP JOINT?!

WE'RE WASTING
TIME. I'LL TRY
TO PICK UP
CABLE'S SCENT
SO WE CAN
GET OUT OF
HERE.

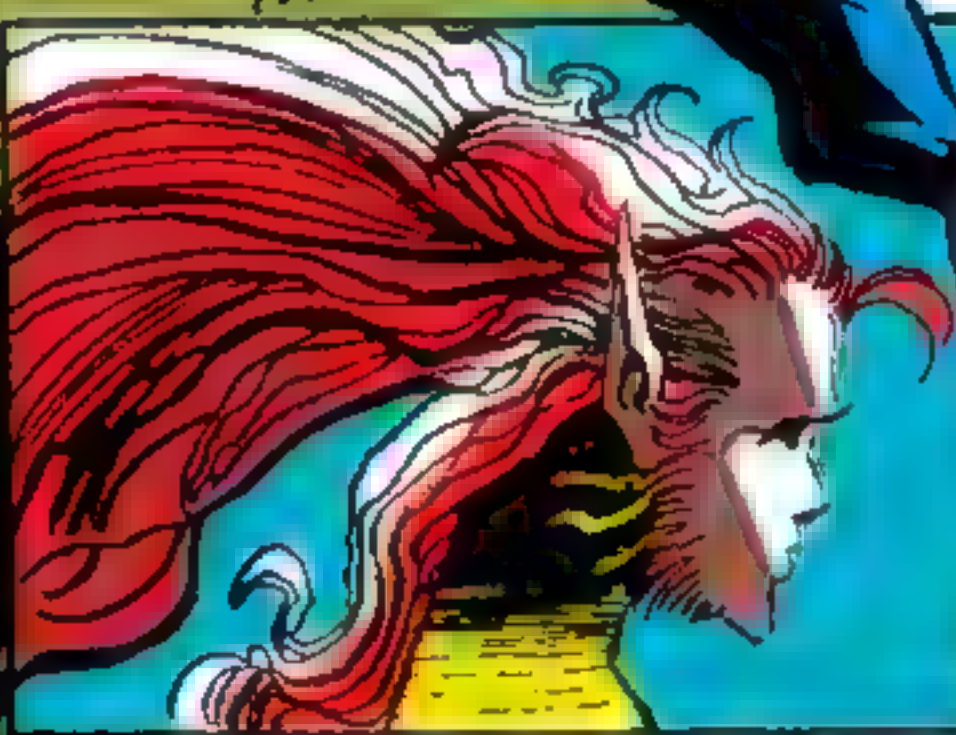


ONLY PLACE YOU'RE GETTING, KIDS, IS UP AGAINST THE **SHIP!** C'MON! **SPREAD 'EM!**

I'M A GOVERNMENT REP, AND YOU BOZOS ARE WANTED **BIG-TIME!**

HOW NICE. MUTANT-AS-GOVERNMENT-STOUGE. BETRAYING HIS OWN KIND.

HOW'D YA LIKE TO LEARN THE FINE ART OF **SWORD-SWALLOWING**, SONNY?



WAIT! WE DON'T HAVE T'ARGUE! SAM... THIS OUT-LAW LIFE OF YUIRS... IT'S NOT WHAT WE DREAMED OF IN OUR STUDENT DAYS. IT'S **MADNESS!**

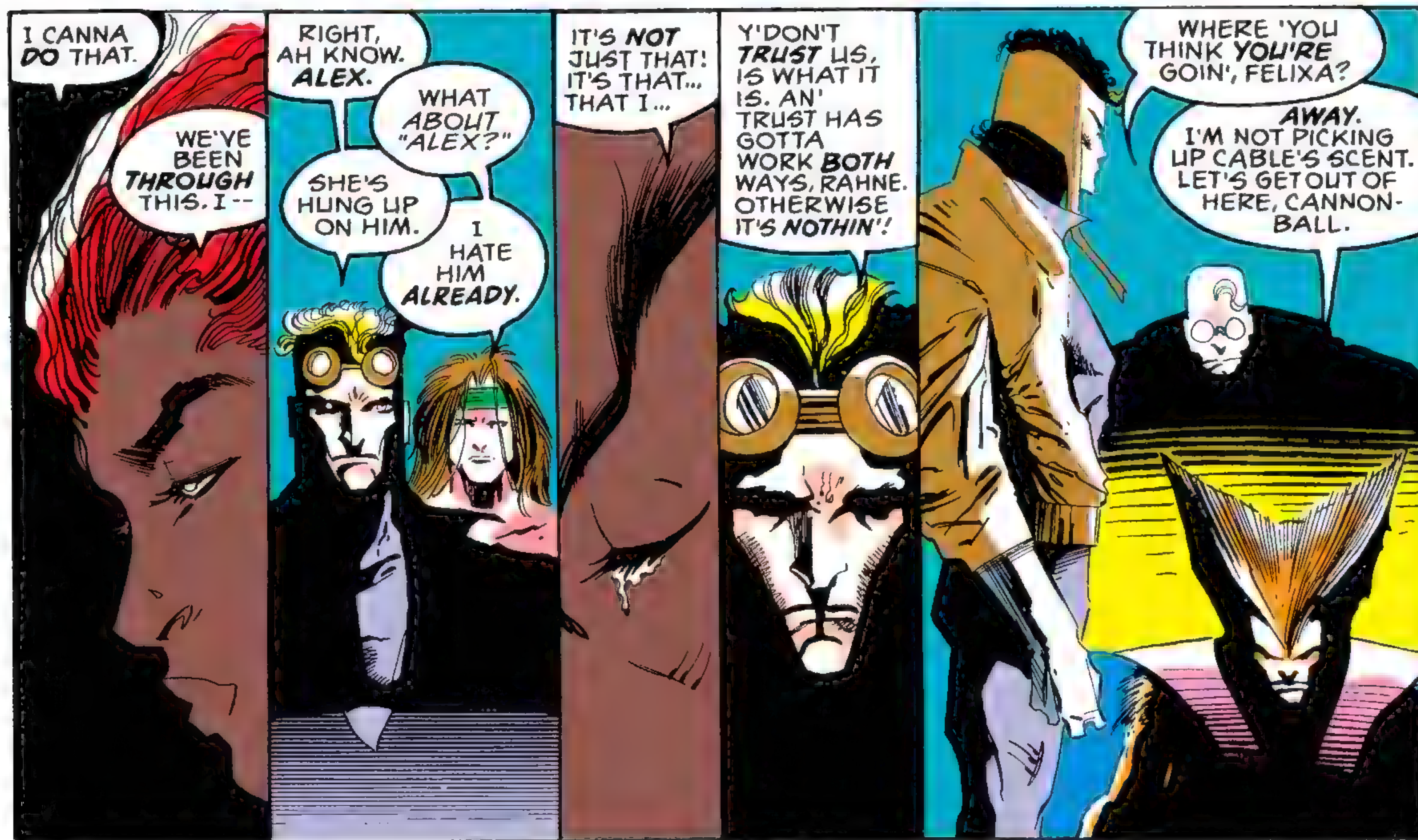
TURN YUIRSELVES IN. TELL WHAT YE KNOW ABOUT CABLE.

CABLE'S ONE OF **US**, AND WE WATCH OUT FOR OUR OWN, NO MATTER HOW IT LOOKS. BUT TELL ME, RAHNE... WHAT IF AH SAID I'D HAVE X-FORCE **SURRENDER**...

YE OWE THAT KILLER NOTHIN'! YE'LL BE WELL-TREATED, I **PROMISE** YE.

... IF YOU AGREED TO **LEAVE** X-FACTOR...

... AND JOIN **US** INSTEAD, IF WE'RE KICKED LOOSE LATER?



I CANNA DO THAT.

WE'VE BEEN THROUGH THIS. I--

RIGHT, AH KNOW. **ALEX.**

WHAT ABOUT "ALEX?"

SHE'S HUNG UP ON HIM.

I HATE HIM ALREADY.

IT'S NOT JUST THAT! IT'S THAT... THAT I...

Y'DON'T **TRUST** US, IS WHAT IT IS. AN' TRUST HAS GOTTA WORK **BOTH** WAYS, RAHNE. OTHERWISE IT'S NOTHIN'!

WHERE 'YOU THINK YOU'RE GOIN', FELIXA?

AWAY. I'M NOT PICKING UP CABLE'S SCENT. LET'S GET OUT OF HERE, CANNON-BALL.

IF YA'D ASKED US ABOUT CABLE'S SCENT, WE COULD'VE TOLD'JA THAT.

YOU HAVE MADE YOUR LAST MISTAKE!

WON'T BE THE FIRST TIME!

HEY! WATCH WITH THE CLAWS!

AND IF YA'D ASKED ABOUT LEAVIN', WE COULD'VE ANSWERED THAT, TOO.

OWWW!

YOU HAVE FAR GREATER CAUSE FOR CONCERN THAN FERAL'S CLAWS, MUTANT TRAITOR!

ARRHH!

GUIDO!

NICE... SLICE, KID!

TAKES A HECK OF A LOT TO HURT ME. MOST THINGS ON THIS PLANET CAN'T DO IT.

YOU LOOK A LOT LESS STURDY THAN ME, THOUGH.

LOOKS CAN BE DECEIVING. ALTHOUGH SINCE YOU LOOK LIKE A FOOL, YOU WOULD BE AN EXCEPTION.



GET OUT OF MUH WAY!

MAKE ME

FERAL, DON'T HURT HER! DON'T--

AARRAH!

JEEZ! YOU WERE WORRIED ABOUT FERAL HURTING RAHNE?!

...OOOFF!

YOU'RE QUICK, KID. I'LL GIVE YA THAT...

AND I REGRET, MASSIVE ONE, THAT I MUST GIVE YOU...

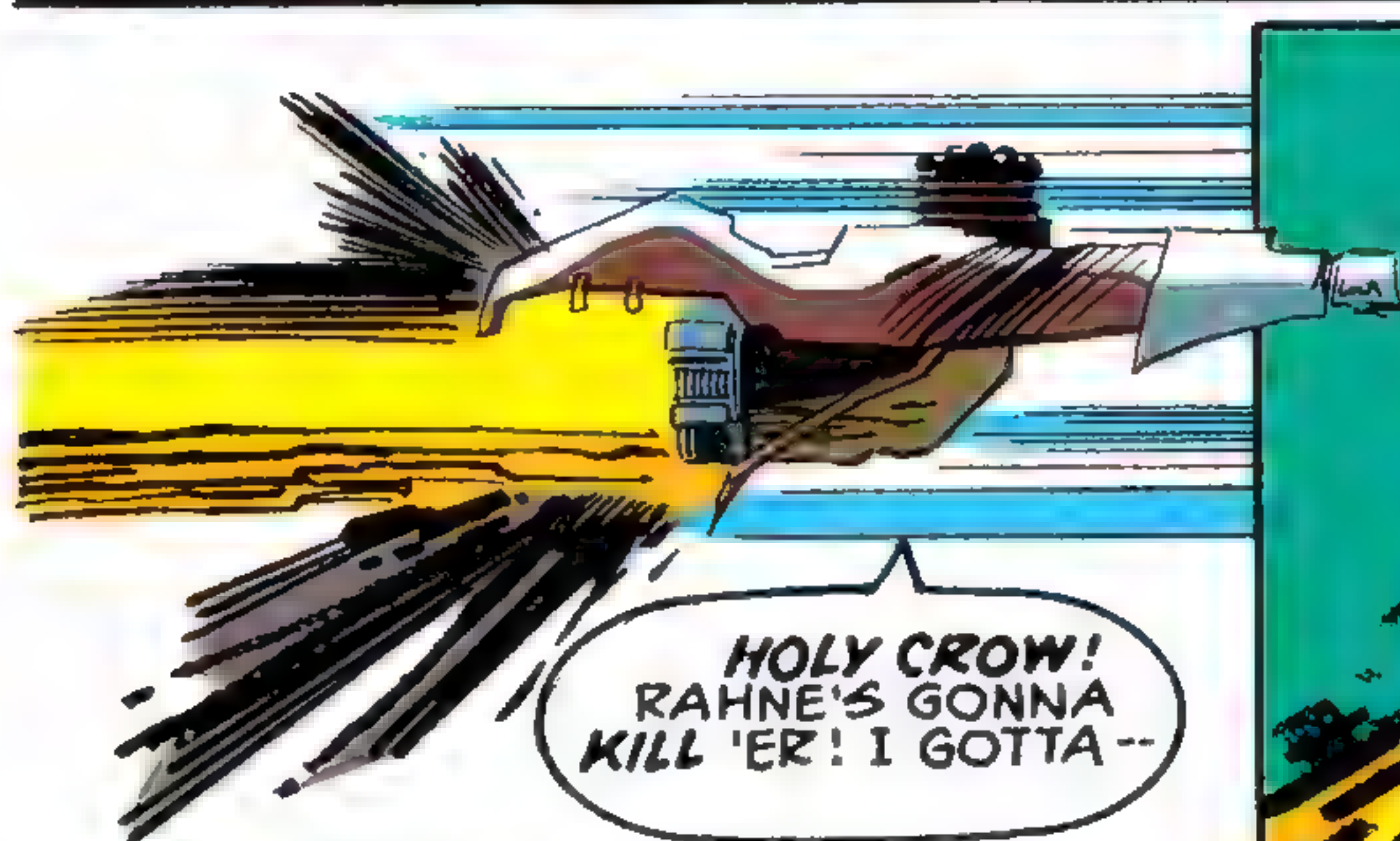
THIS!

AEEGH!!

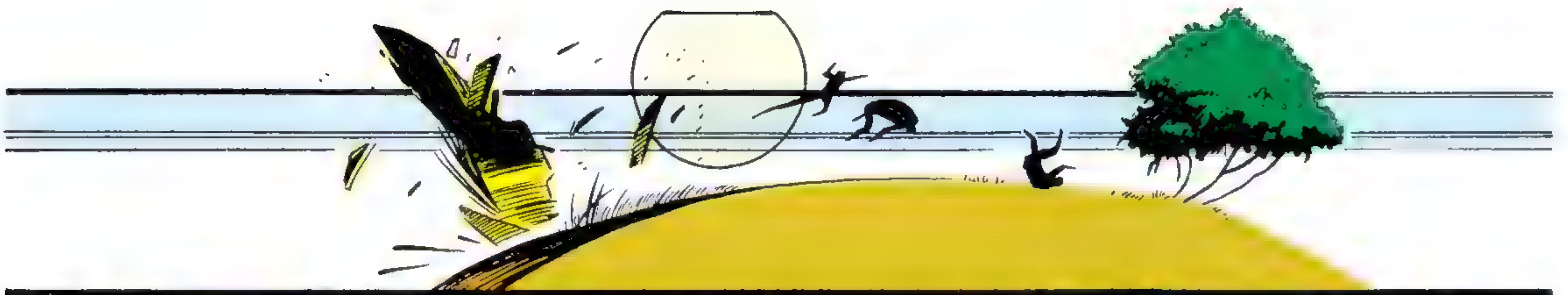
ARR...

HUH!

MY... MY SWORD?! WHAT HAPPENED TO--







WOW. YOU REALLY SHOWED THEM.

YEAH, YOU SAID I--



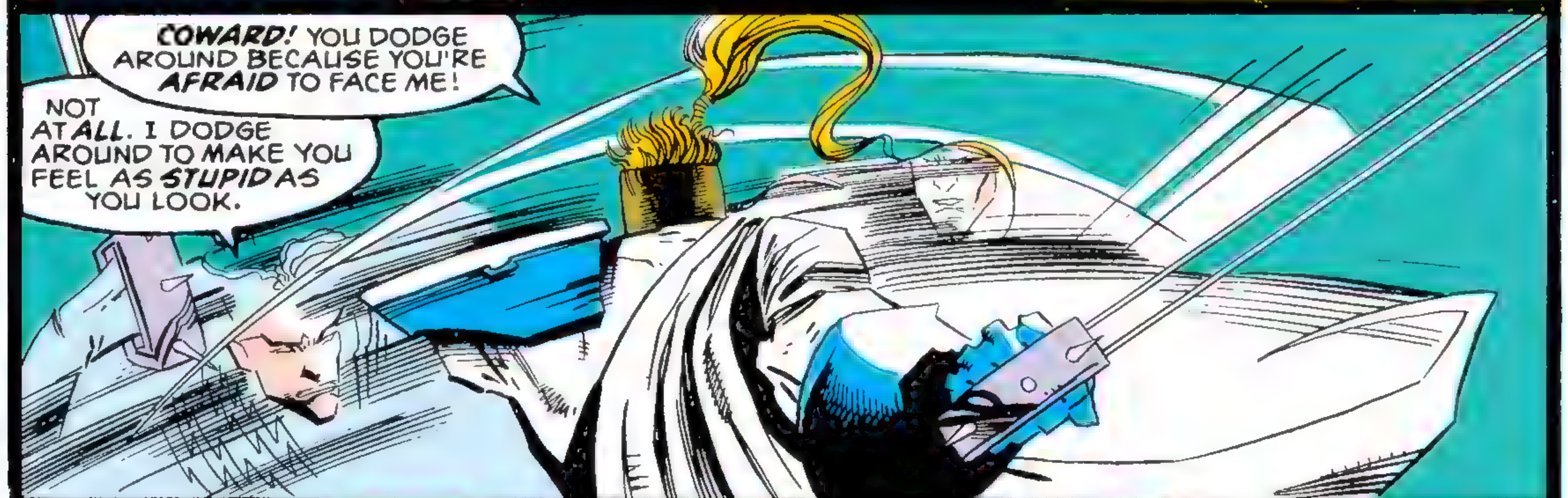
Ohhh NO YOU DON'T!!



Ohhh YES I DO!

I'M THE **WRONG** ONE TO HIT WITH VIBRO WAVES, SONNY... LEASTWAYS IF YOU DON'T WANT 'EM RIGHT **BACK** AT YA!

OOOFFFF!



COWARD! YOU DODGE AROUND BECAUSE YOU'RE **AFRAID** TO FACE ME!

NOT AT ALL. I DODGE AROUND TO MAKE YOU FEEL AS **STUPID** AS YOU LOOK.



I WAS **RIGHT**. YOU ARE WITHOUT HONOR.

YOU OBNOXIOUS **PUNK!**

THE **WORST** THING YOU COULD DO IS MERIT MY **FULL** ATTENTION!

MY ENTIRE **LIFE** CONSISTS OF FINDING WAYS TO EASE THE **BOREDOM**, WHICH YOU'RE PRESENTLY DOING.

BUT YOU'RE COMING **DANGEROUSLY** CLOSE TO CROSSING THE LINE INTO THE REALM OF BEING AN **ANNOYANCE**.

MEANWHILE, IN THE
OPERATING THEATER...

NURSE, SWAB
THAT AREA. I'M
NOT GETTING A
GOOD LOOK
AT...

DEAR
GOD...

WHAT
THE
BLAZES
IS
THAT?

AND...

HAVOK IS THE MOST
DANGEROUS, 'CAUSE HE
CAN ATTACK FROM LONG
DISTANCES WITH
DEVASTATING
FORCE.

BUT HE'S WOOLY--
BOTH HIM AND POLARIS
ARE. THIS IS MY CHANCE
TO PUT 'EM DOWN
FOR THE...

Uh-Oh. NOT
AS WOOLY AS
I THOUGHT.

HOLD 'EM
STEADY, LORNA. JUST
NEED ANOTHER FEW SECONDS
TO GET MY HEAD TOGETHER...

I GOT YER
SECONDS
RIGHT
HERE...

FOUR...

THREE...

TWO...

ONE!

BOOM

NICE
BAIL-
OUT,
BOOMER!
THANKS!

YEAH, REAL NICE, BOOM BOOM. ATTACKING FROM BEHIND.

CABLE TAUGHT YOU SOME OF THE BEST TRICKS OF THE TRADE, HUH?

AW, SUCK A TIME BOMB, YOU X-FACTOR LOW LI--

MADROX? YOU?! AW NUTS!

THAT'S RIGHT

BOOM BOOM

YOU JUST MADE

MORE TROUBLE FOR YOURSELF.

THIS WHOLE THING'S GOING STRAIGHT DOWN THE outhouse CHUTE.

GOTTA WRAP IT.

FAST!

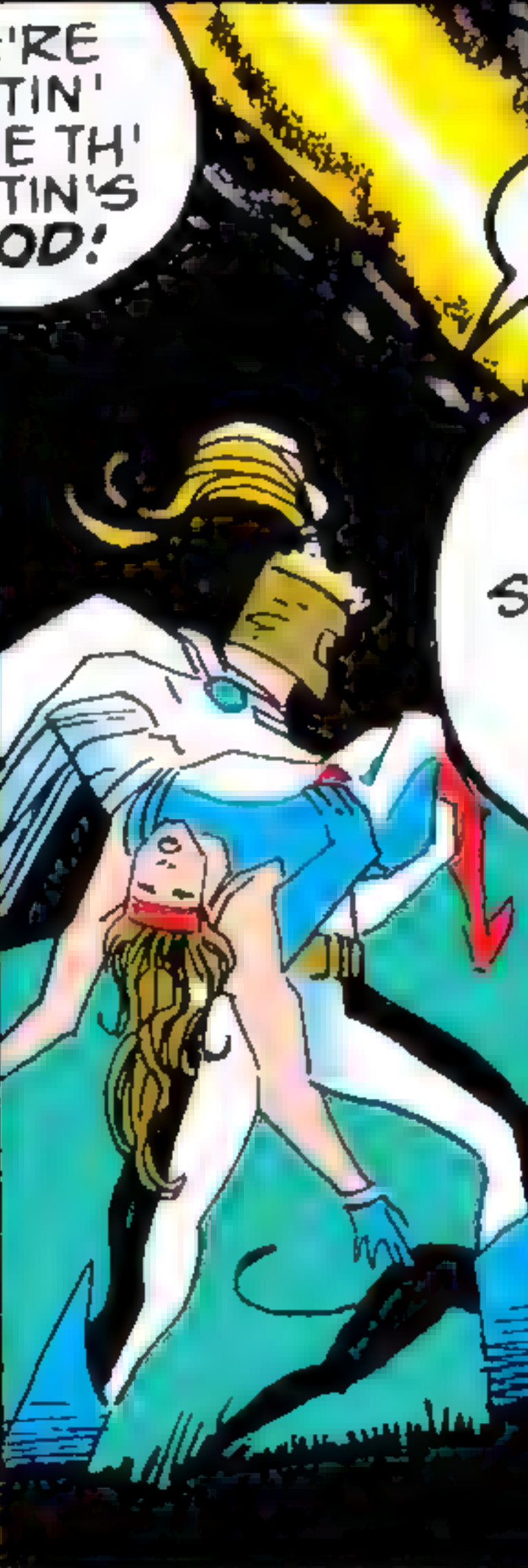
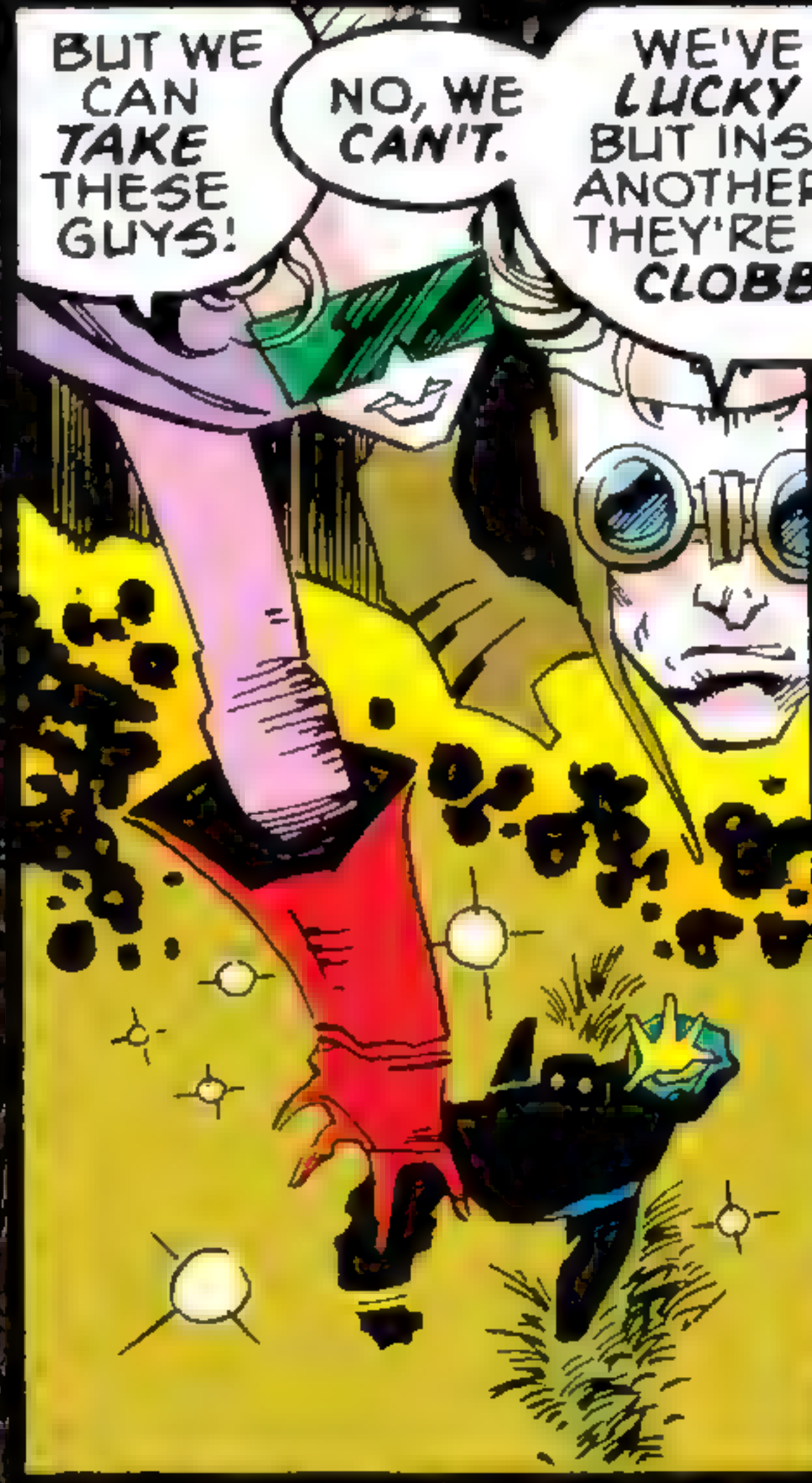
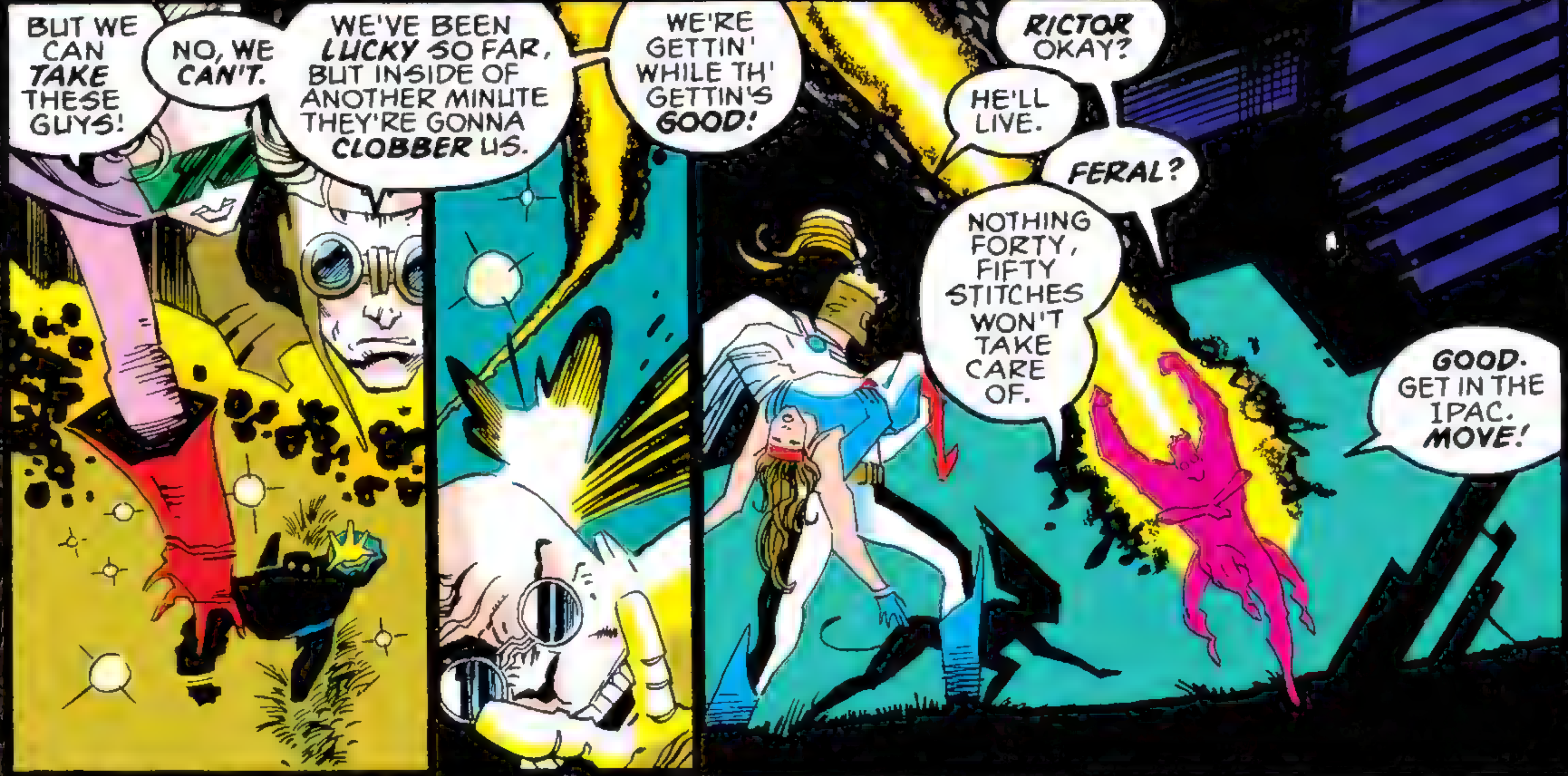
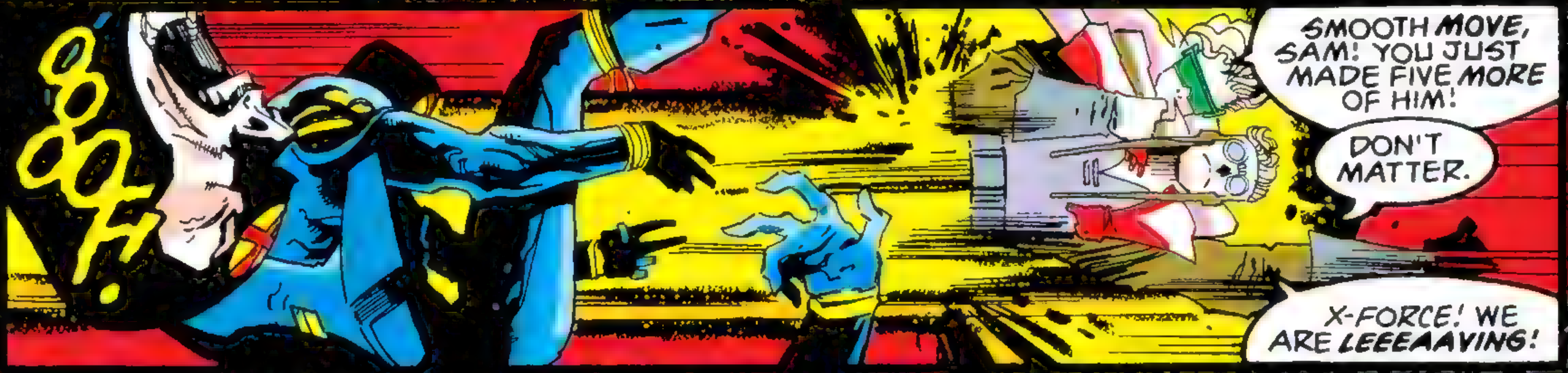
MY MUSCLES ARE STARTING TO ACHE FROM MOVING THIS SLOWLY...

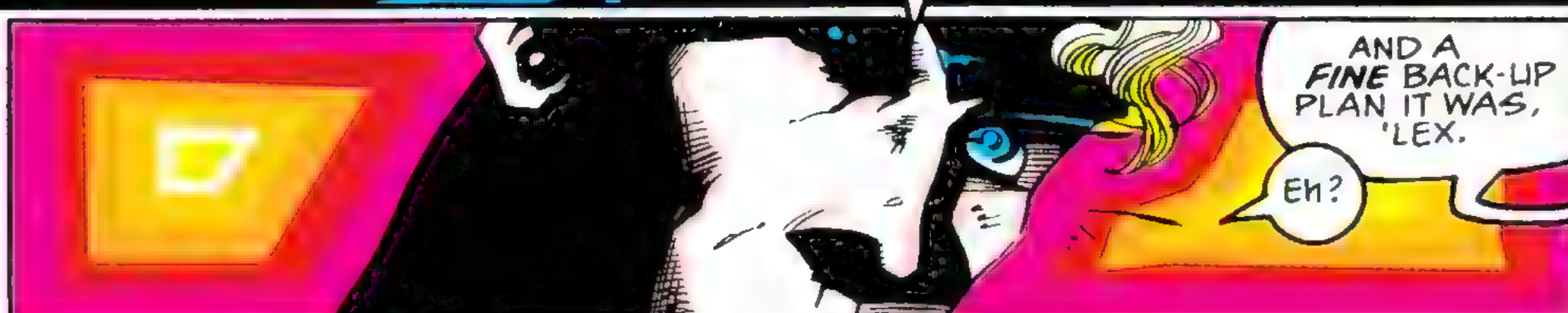
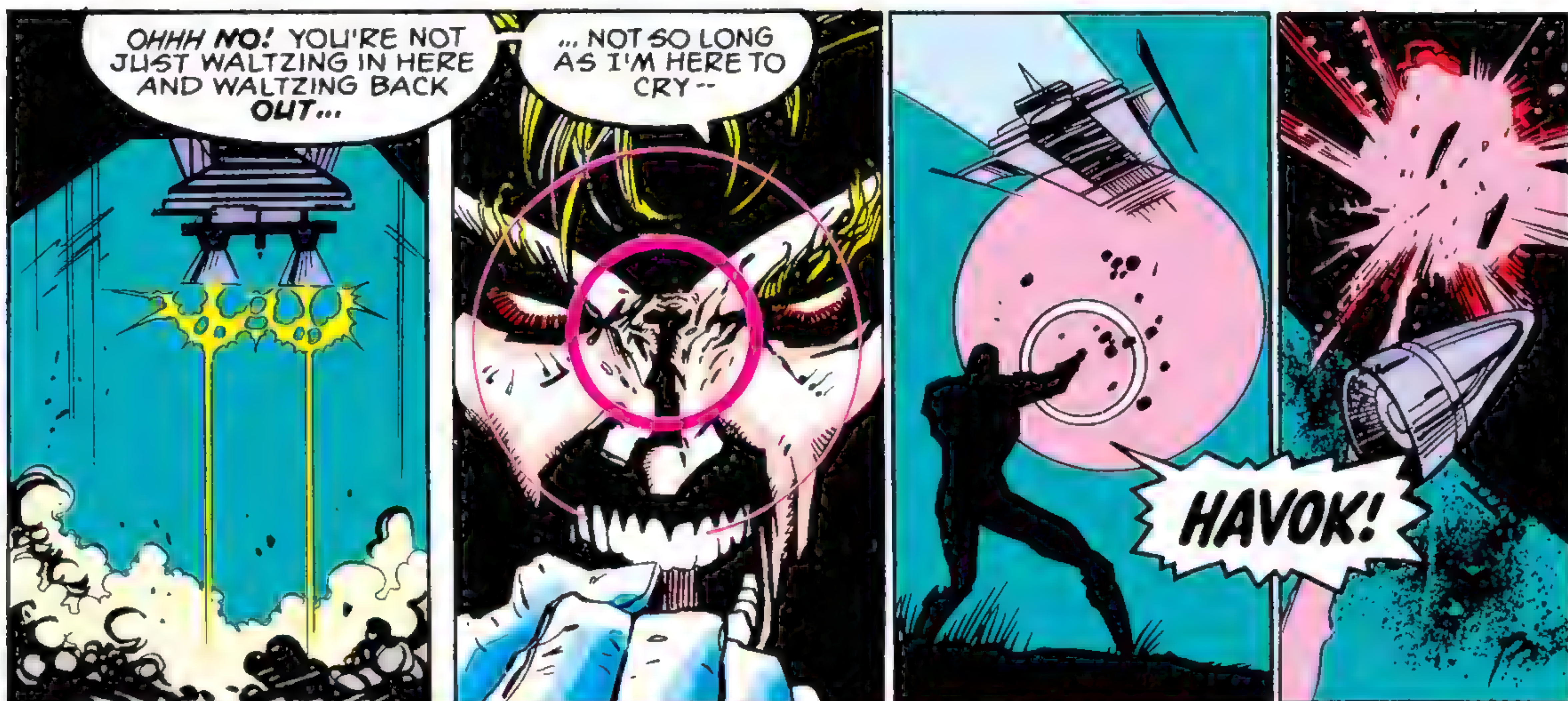
...TIME TO END THIS.

FIRST, I'LL GIVE YOU A RICHLY-DESERVED HAIRCUT. THEN--

UNNNHH!

CANNONBALL! BLAST YOU! HE WAS MY OPPONENT!





MIND IF WE
COME ALONG
TO **BACKUP**
YOUR BACK-
UP PLAN?

ME, **PSYLOCKE**,
GAMBIT, **ROGUE**,
AND **BEAST**...

WE GOT
A LITTLE BIT
OF EXPERIENCE
IN THESE KINDS
OF SCRAPS.

**OUT-
STANDING**,
LOGAN! YOU'RE
HERE TO HELP
BRING IN
X-FORCE?

MOST
ASSUREDLY,
ALEX.

BECAUSE YOUR
HYPOTHESIS WOULD
SEEM TO HAVE MERIT.
IF WE NAIL X-FORCE...
THEN WE GET...

CABLE.

OH, **GOOD!** INCLUDING
HBO? AND MAYBE
THE DISNEY CHANNEL
FOR RAHNE...

QUIET
YOU'RE
EMBARRASSING
ME.

WE'RE HEADING
BACK TO THE HOSPITAL
TO SEE WHAT THE
STATUS IS WITH
CHARLIE.

BUT
THE WAY
PEOPLE
WERE
FLYING IN
AND OUT
OF THE
OPERATION
ROOM...

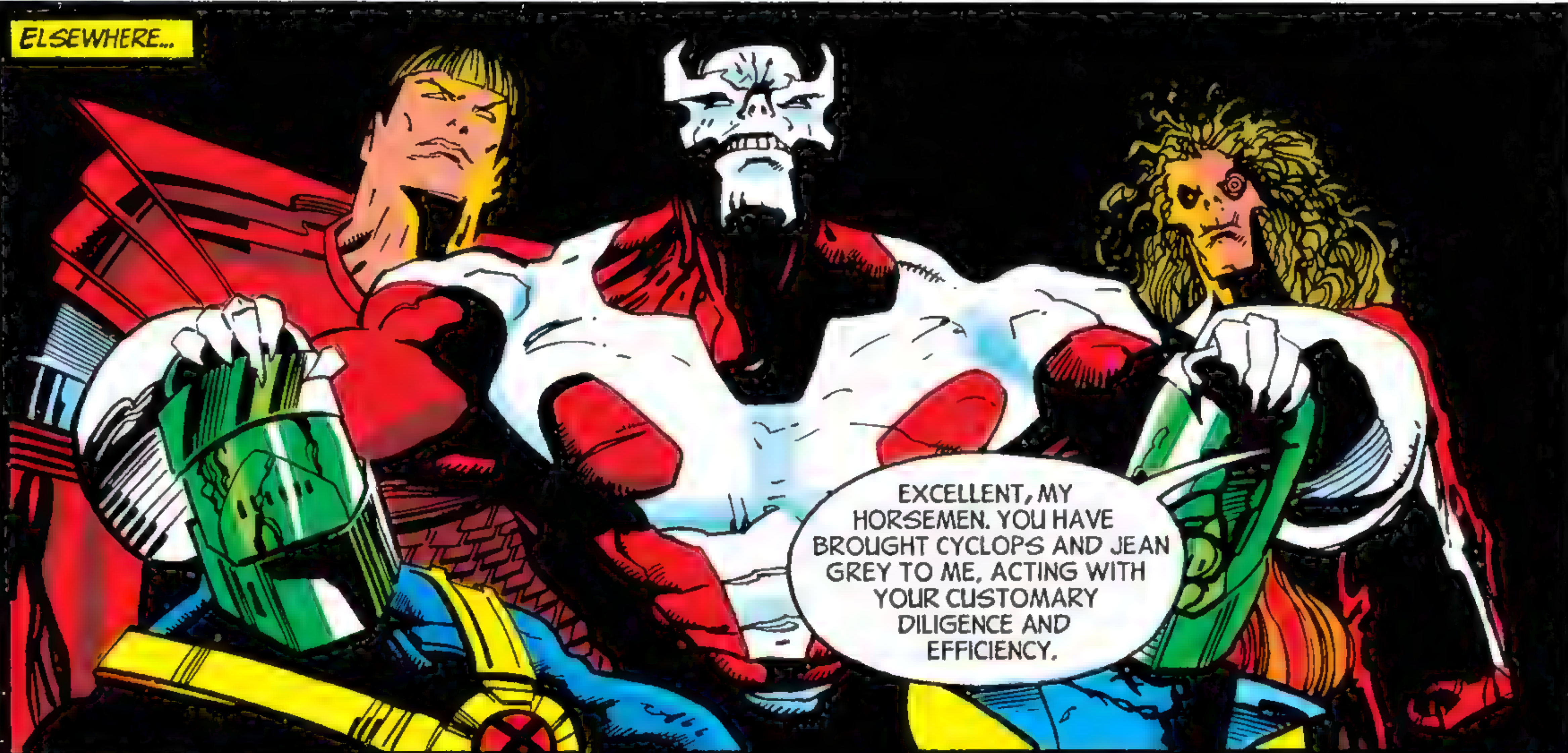
...IT
DON'T
LOOK SO
HOT.

TERRIFIC. I DON'T
SEE HOW THINGS
COULD GET
WORSE.

WHERE'S
SCOTTY?

YOU
WOULD
HAVE TO
ASK THAT...


ELSEWHERE...



EXCELLENT, MY HORSEMEN. YOU HAVE BROUGHT CYCLOPS AND JEAN GREY TO ME, ACTING WITH YOUR CUSTOMARY DILIGENCE AND EFFICIENCY.

YOU WILL BE REWARDED.


LEAVE ME NOW.



SO, SCOTT... JEAN... KIDNAPPED BY THE SERVANTS OF APOCALYPSE...

FACING THE MIGHT OF APOCALYPSE...

I'M SURE YOU'D LIKE TO ASK THE GREAT APOCALYPSE MANY QUESTIONS.



HOW UNFORTUNATE FOR YOU...

THAT APOCALYPSE IS NOWHERE REMOTELY IN THE VICINITY.

WHAT A SINISTER TURN OF EVENTS THIS IS, EH?

AND, AT THE HOSPITAL...

WE HAVE HIM **STABILIZED**, AND PLACED INTO SOME OF THE NEWEST STASIS EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE.

BUT IT DOESN'T SEEM TO BE RETARDING THE SPREAD OF HIS... **CONDITION**.

FRANKLY... THIS IS **OUT** OF MY LEAGUE. YOU PEOPLE ARE **MUTANTS**... AND **YOU**, MISS COOPER, **WORK** WITH **MUTANTS**...

IF YOU HAVE A CLUE... **ANYTHING** APPROACHING A **DIAGNOSIS**...

KINDLY **SHARE** IT WITH ME.

WHAT... **IS** THAT ON HIS CHEST?

I CAN TELL YOU.

IT'S A **TECHNOVIRUS**. IT TRANSFORMS **LIVING TISSUE** INTO A **MECHANICAL ORGANISM**.

HOW DO WE **STOP** IT?

THAT'S THE **PROBLEM**, VAL.

WE **CAN'T**.

LET'S GET HIM TO THE **MANSION**.

WILL THAT **HELP** HIM?

IN A WAY. AFTER ALL, A MAN SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO **DIE** IN HIS OWN **HOME**.

NEXT ISSUE: THE ACTION MOVES TO XAVIER'S MANSION! CHECK IT OUT IN X-MEN #14, THE THIRD PART OF X-CUTIONER'S SONG!



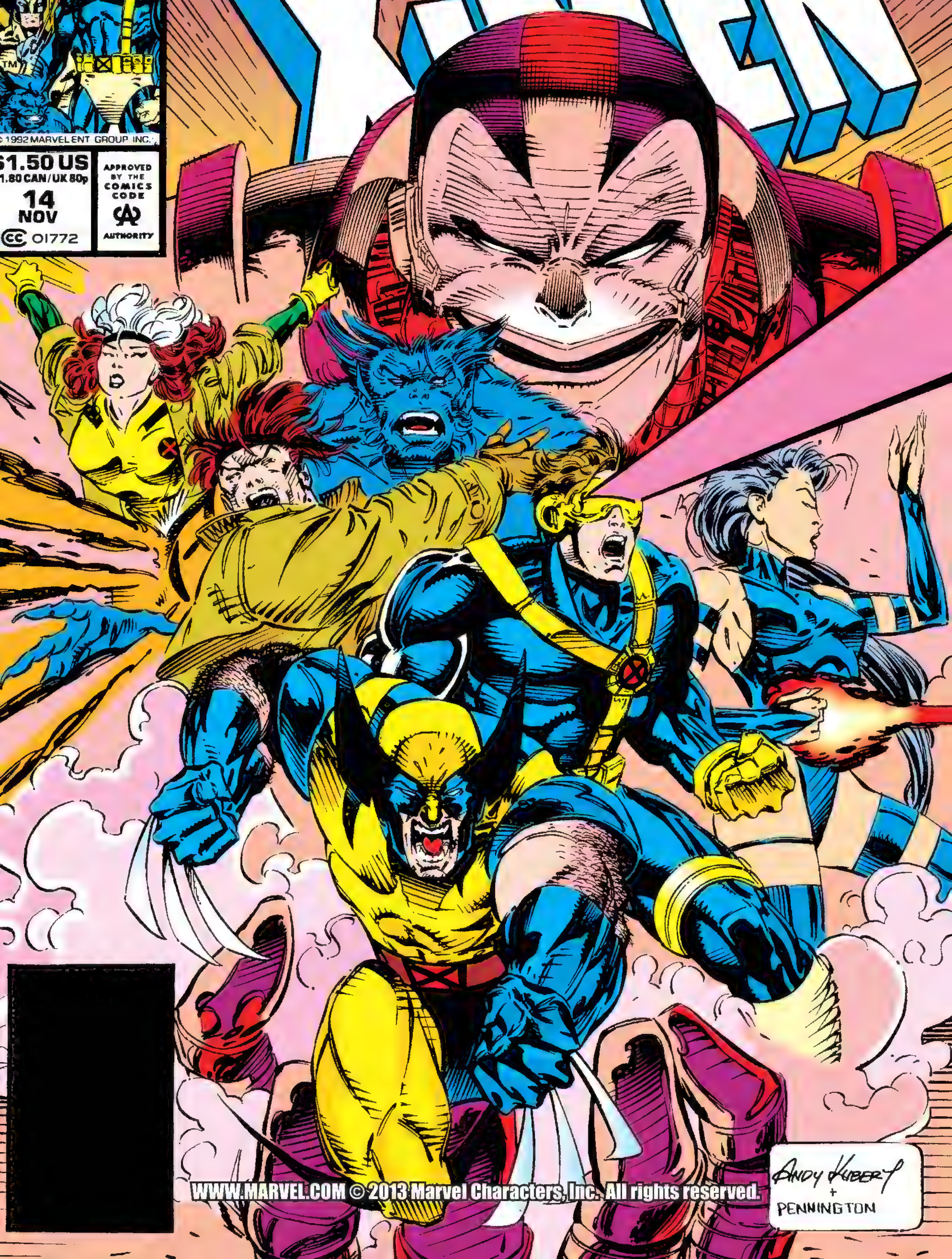
X-CUTIONER'S SONG

PART 3

WYMAN

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ANDY KUBERT
+
PENNINGTON

PROFESSOR XAVIER -- INFECTED BY A TECHNO-ORGANIC VIRUS!
THE MAN WHO SHOT HIM -- CABLE? CYCLOPS AND JEAN GREY --
KIDNAPPED BY THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF APOCALYPSE!
X-FORCE -- ON THE RUN! THE X-CUTIONER'S SONG CONTINUES!

HE'S NOT
GETTING ANY BETTER,
I'M AFRAID TO SAY.

NOT EVEN
THE MANSION'S
ALIEN SHI'AR MEDICAL
EQUIPMENT IS MAKING
A DENT IN HIS
CONDITION.

YE HAVE
T'BELIEVE WE CAN
MAKE A DIFFERENCE,
HANK.

I'M NOT
THE DEFEATIST
TYPE, BUT QUITE
FRANKLY, I AM
OPEN TO
SUGGESTIONS--

--BECAUSE
IF WE DON'T DO
SOMETHING
SOON--

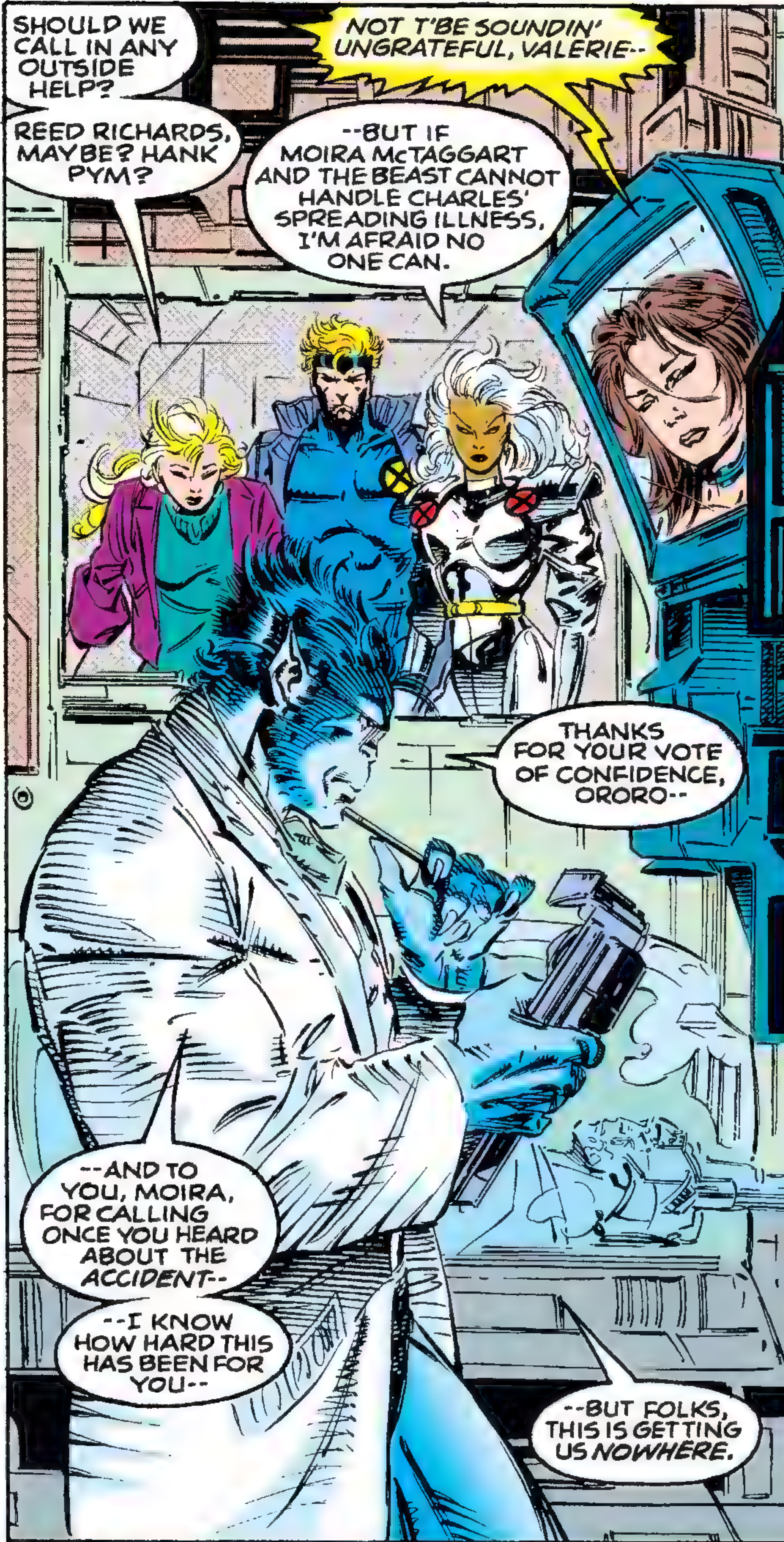
--CHARLES
XAVIER IS GOING
TO DIE!

AN X-CITING
WELCOME ABOARD TO
ANDY KUBERT
PENCILER

STAN LEE PROUDLY
PRESENTS
A TALE OF THE X-MEN:

FINGERS ON THE TRIGGER

FABIAN NICIEZA WRITER MARK PENNINGTON INKER LOIS BUHALIS LETTERER MARIE JAVINS COLORIST BOB HARRAS EDITOR TOM DEFALCO EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



SHOULD WE CALL IN ANY OUTSIDE HELP?

REED RICHARDS, MAYBE? HANK PYM?

NOT T'BE SOUNDIN' UNGRATEFUL, VALERIE--

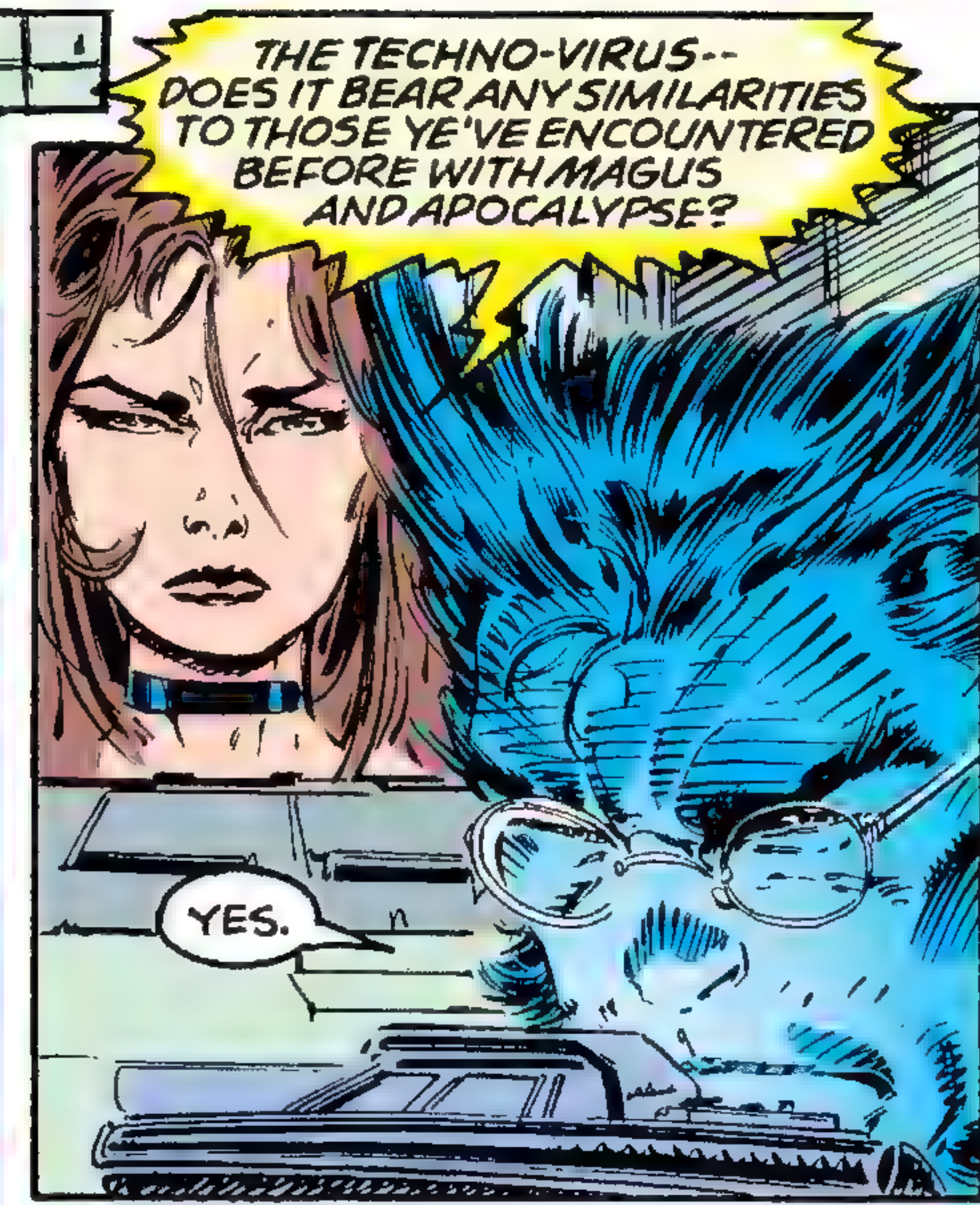
--BUT IF MOIRA McTAGGART AND THE BEAST CANNOT HANDLE CHARLES' SPREADING ILLNESS, I'M AFRAID NO ONE CAN.

THANKS FOR YOUR VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, ORORO--

--AND TO YOU, MOIRA, FOR CALLING ONCE YOU HEARD ABOUT THE ACCIDENT--

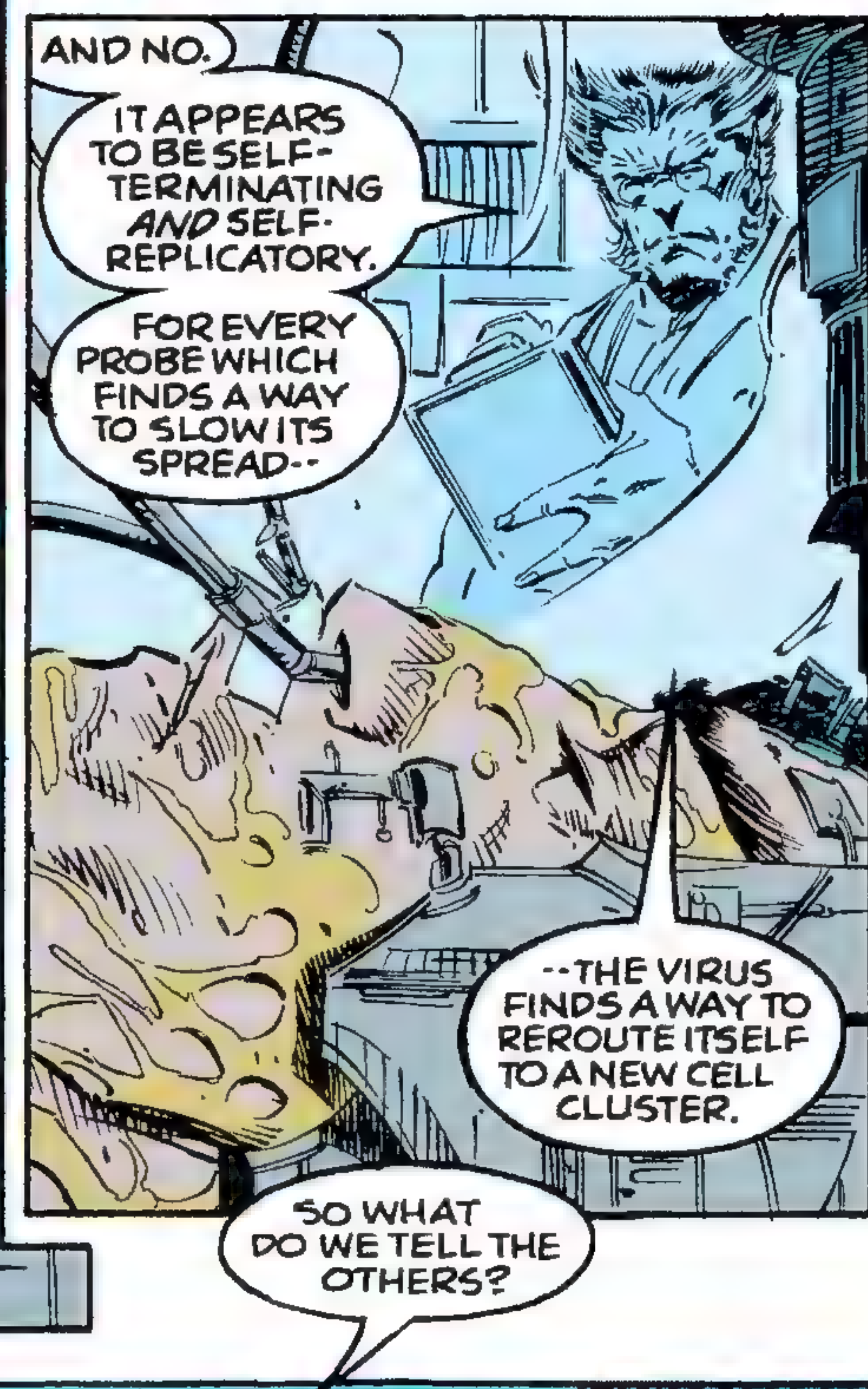
--I KNOW HOW HARD THIS HAS BEEN FOR YOU--

--BUT FOLKS, THIS IS GETTING US NOWHERE.



THE TECHNO-VIRUS-- DOES IT BEAR ANY SIMILARITIES TO THOSE YE'VE ENCOUNTERED BEFORE WITH MAGUS AND APOCALYPSE?

YES.



AND NO.

IT APPEARS TO BE SELF-TERMINATING AND SELF-REPLICATORY.

FOR EVERY PROBE WHICH FINDS A WAY TO SLOW ITS SPREAD--

--THE VIRUS FINDS A WAY TO REROUTE ITSELF TO A NEW CELL CLUSTER.

SO WHAT DO WE TELL THE OTHERS?



TELL THEM THE TRUTH, ALEX.

TELL THEM, AT BEST, PROFESSOR X IS STILL ALIVE.

AND THAT WE'D BETTER FIND A CURE QUICKLY!

THEY STAND GRIMLY,
YET WITH PRIDE,
THESE CHILDREN
OF THE ATOM--

THEY REPRESENT THE DREAM
OF CHARLES XAVIER, PAST,
PRESENT AND FUTURE.

--AWAITING TO
HEAR THE
NEWS ON
THEIR MENTOR'S
CONDITION.

THE X-MEN:
ICEMAN, COLOSSUS,
PSYLOCKE, ARCHANGEL,
BISHOP, GAMBIT,
ROGUÉ, JUBILEE, AND
WOLVERINE.

THE GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED X-FACTOR:
QUICKSILVER, MADROX, STRONG GUY,
POLARIS AND WOLFSBANE.

WELL?

HE IS STABLE--I AM
AFRAID THAT IS ALL
WE CAN EXPECT
FOR NOW.

WE HAVE TO FIND
A WAY TO SAVE
HIM--AND THAT
MEANS FINDING
CABLE!

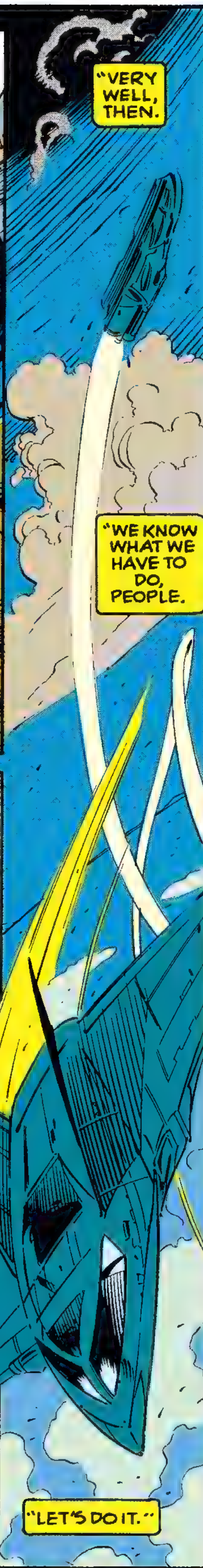
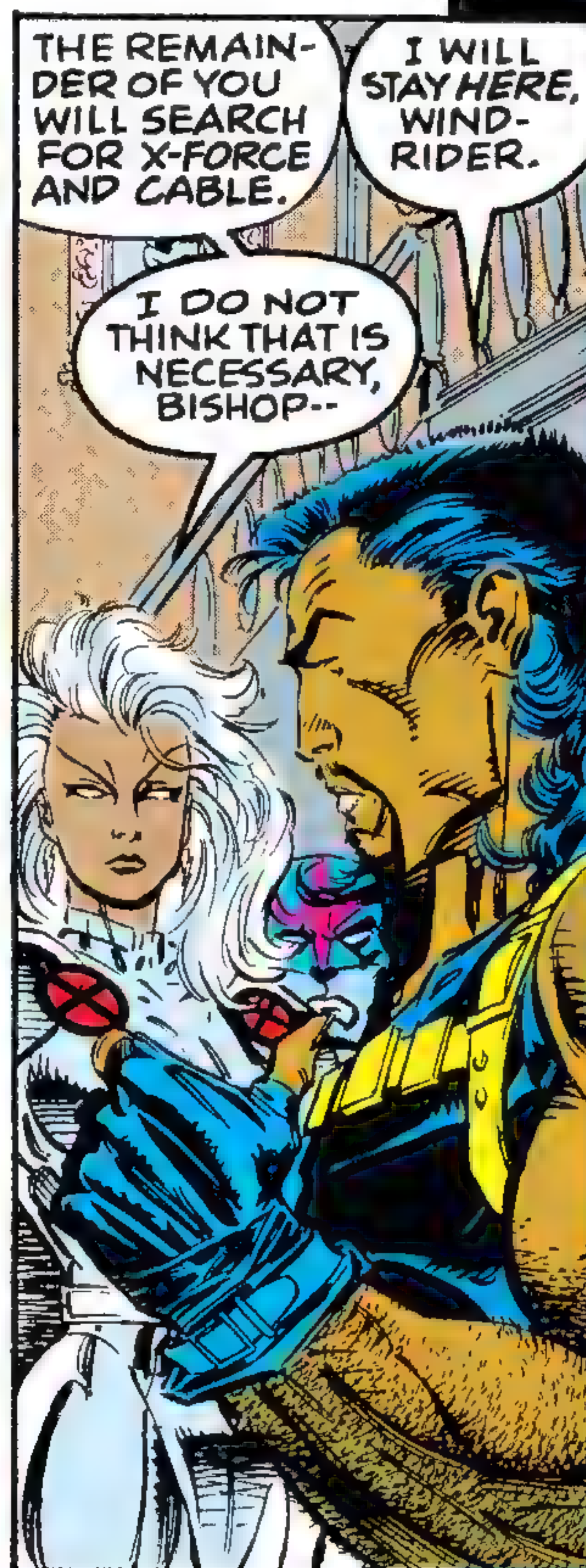
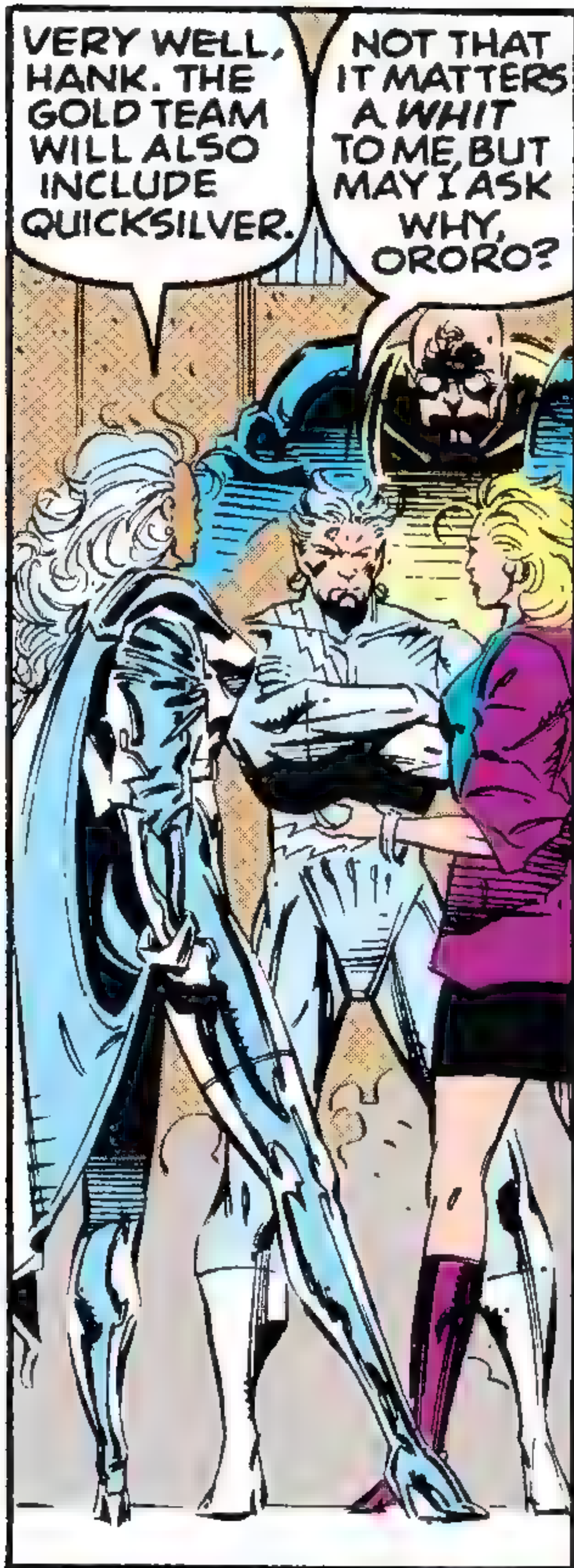
BUT SCOTT
AND JEAN
ARE MISSING
AS WELL,
HAVOK.

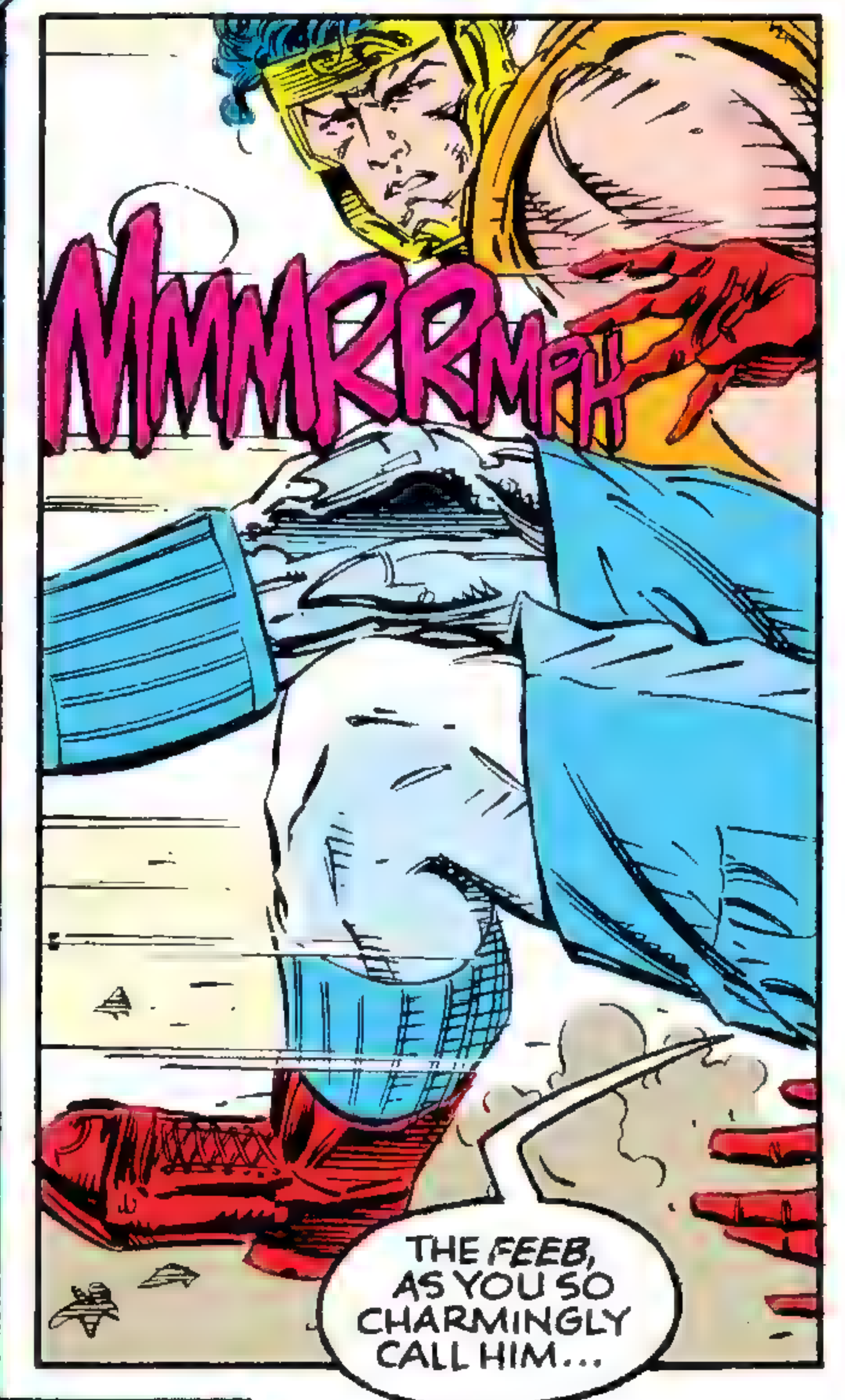
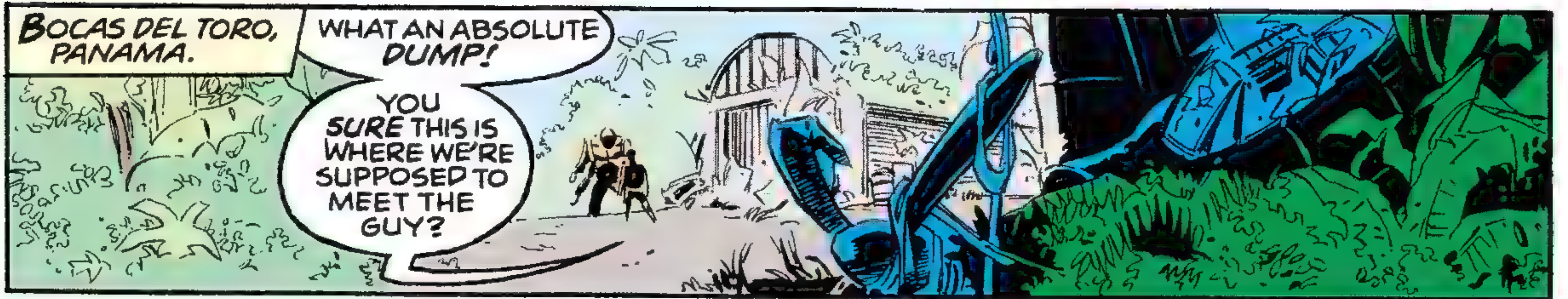
AND ANTICIPATING
A DIVISION ALONG
PRE-ESTABLISHED
TEAM PARAMETERS--

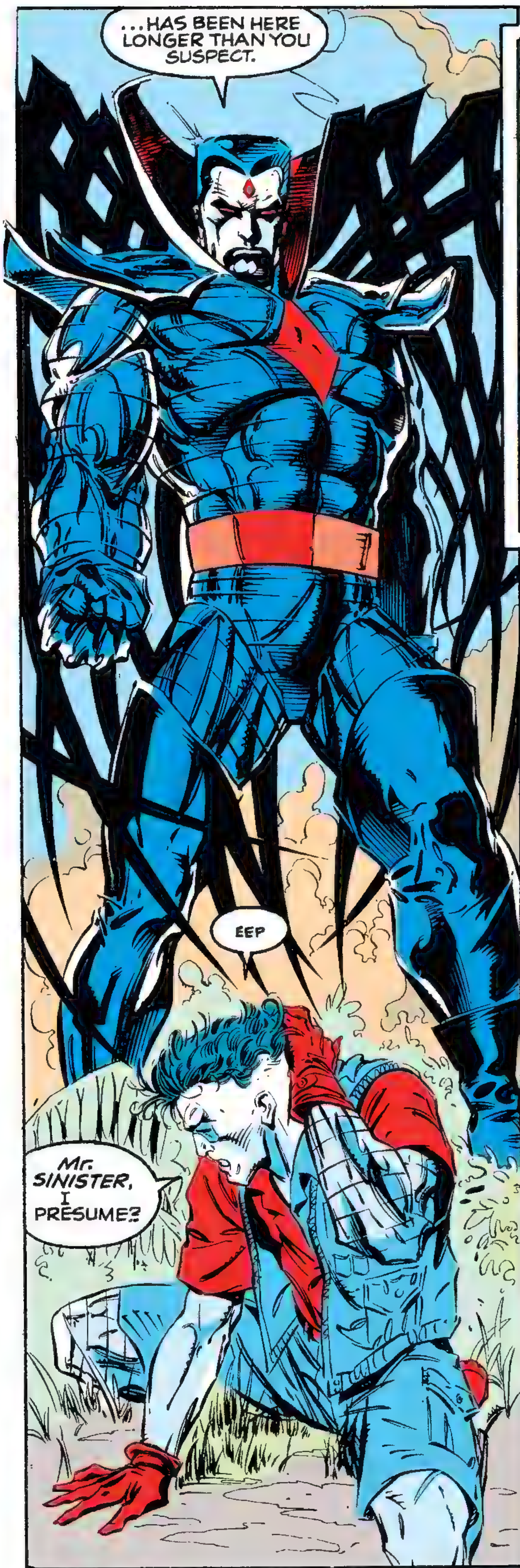
--I WOULD PREFER
JOINING GOLD TEAM
IN SEARCHING OUT
THE HORSEMEN.

SO WE
DIVIDE INTO
TWO GROUPS.

IF APOCALYPSE IS
INVOLVED, WARREN,
BOBBY, AND I HAVE
THE MOST EXPERIENCE
DEALING WITH HIM.



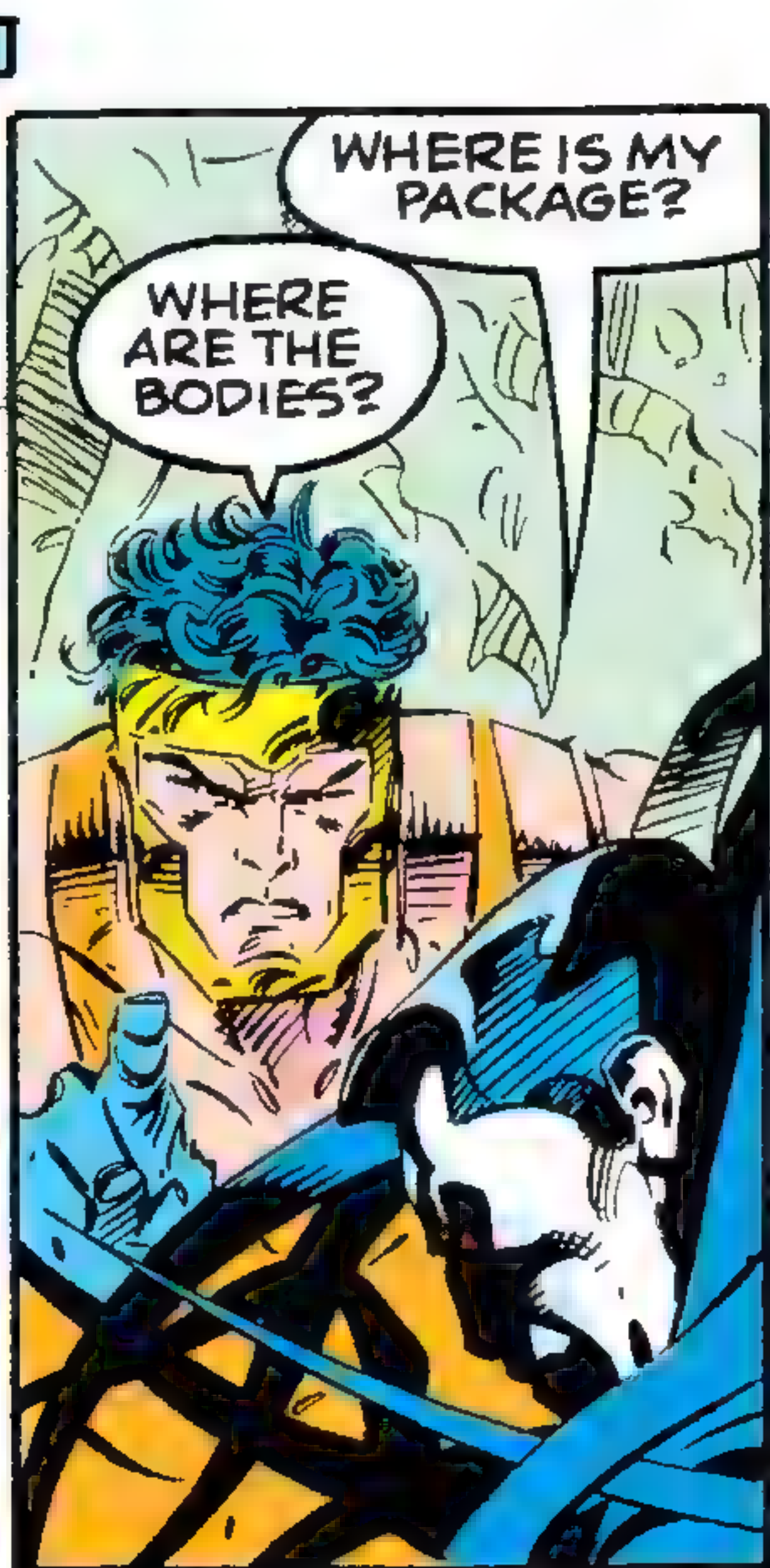




...HAS BEEN HERE LONGER THAN YOU SUSPECT.

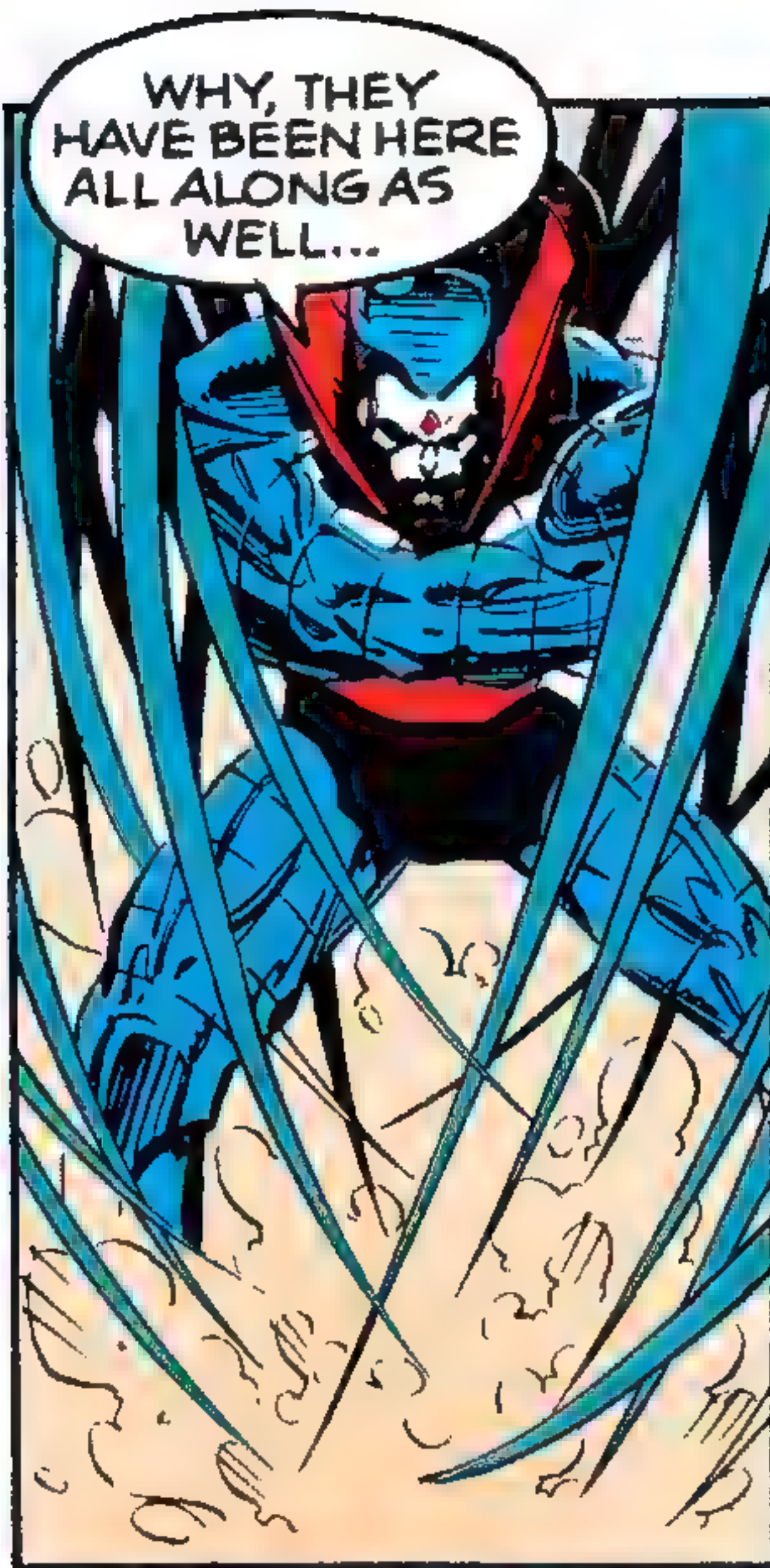
EEP

MR. SINISTER, I PRESUME?

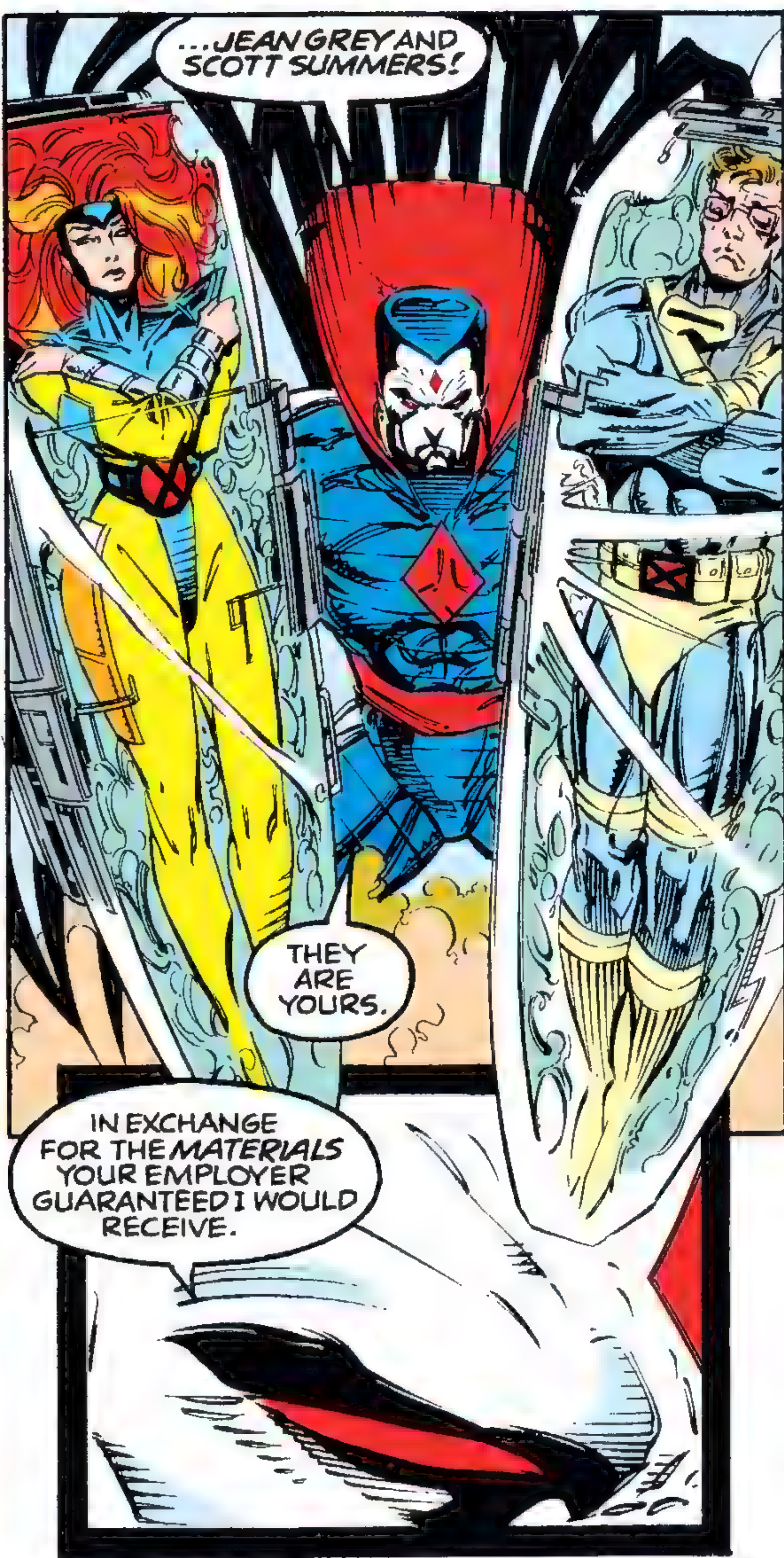


WHERE ARE THE BODIES?

WHERE IS MY PACKAGE?



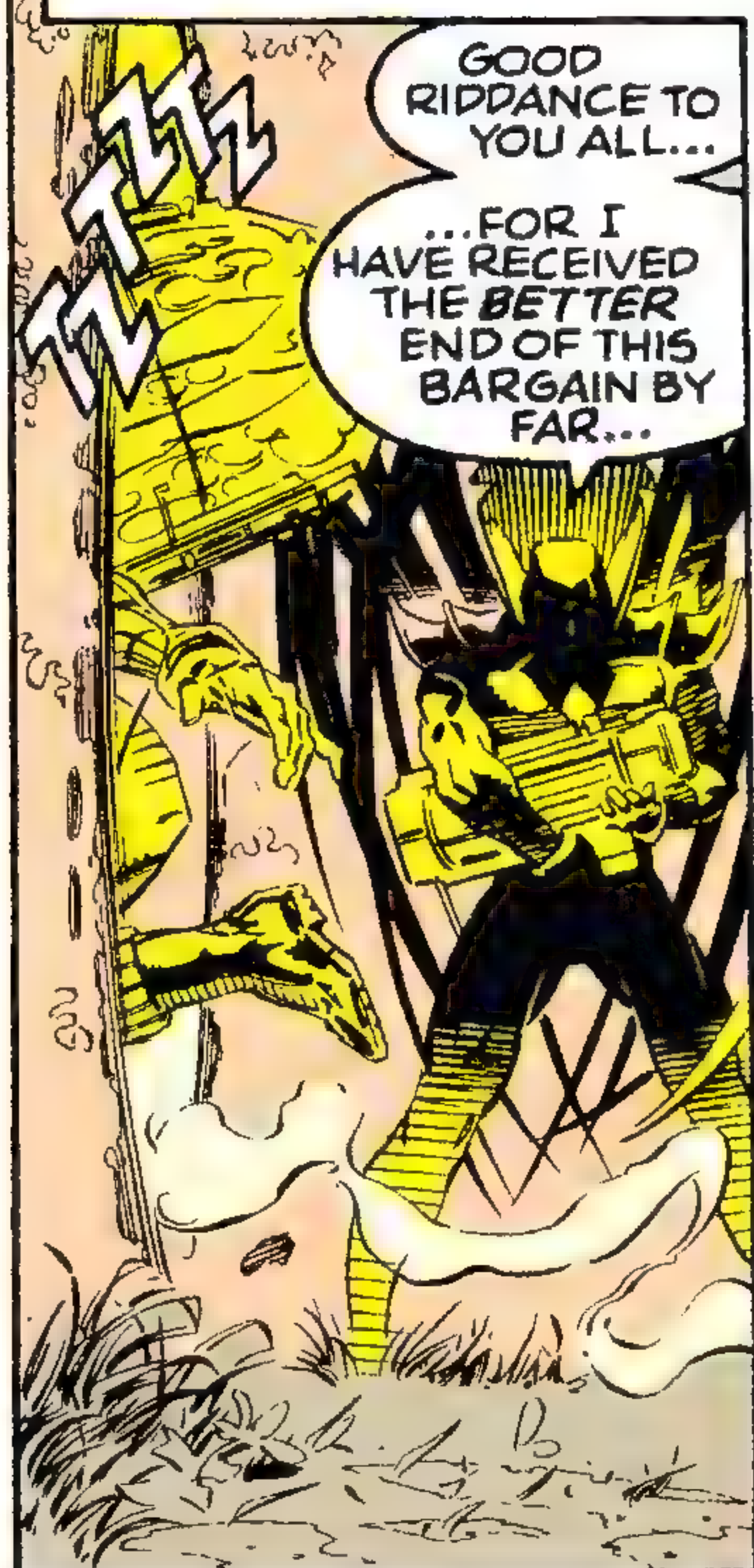
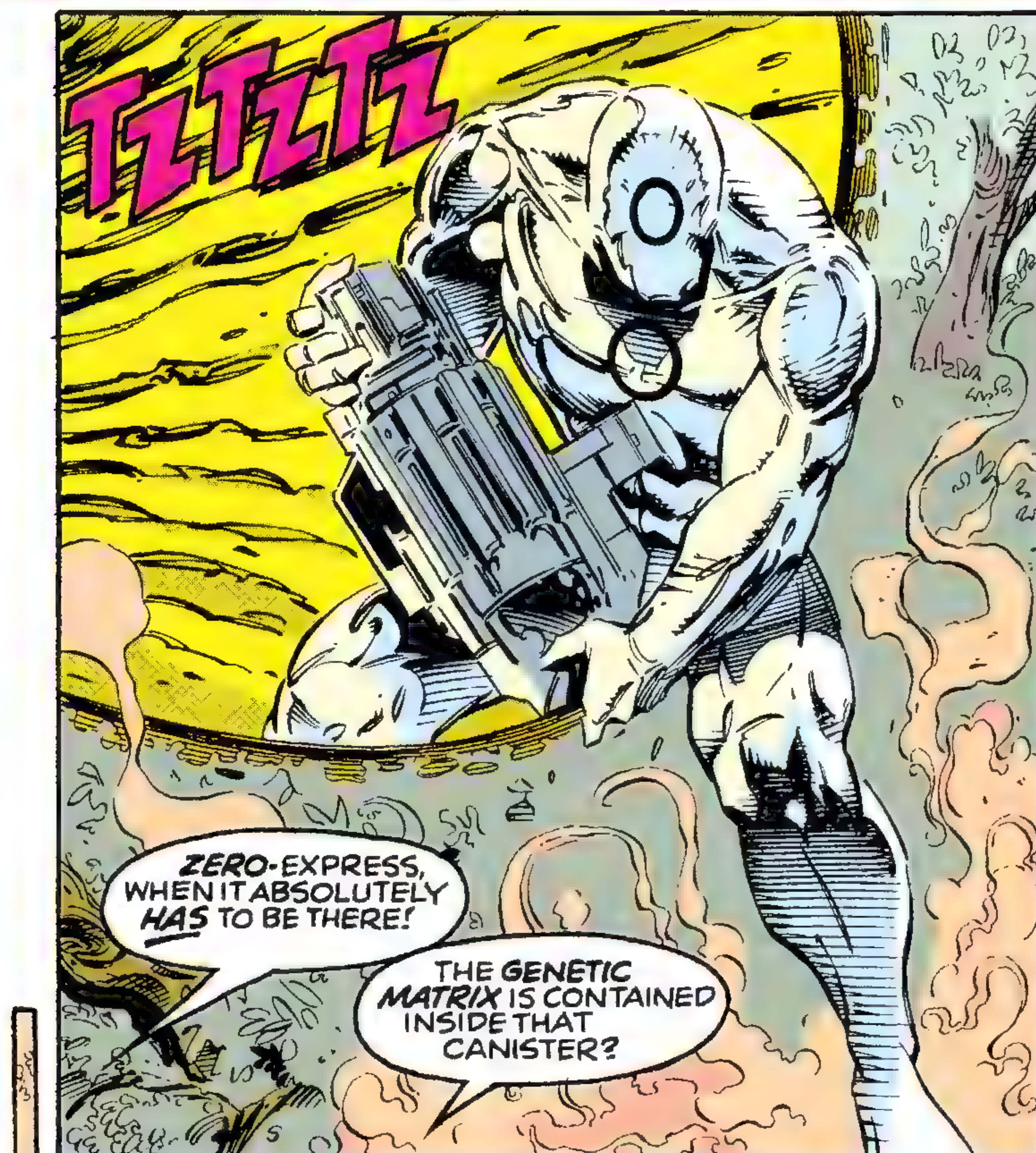
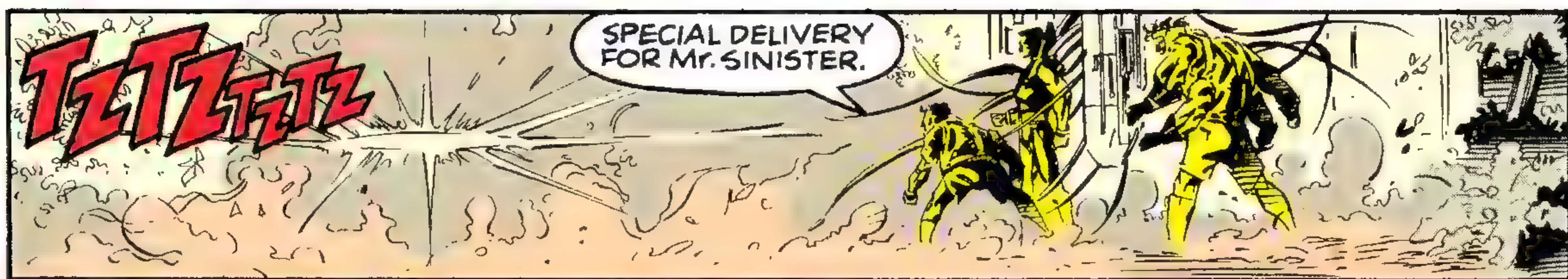
WHY, THEY HAVE BEEN HERE ALL ALONG AS WELL...



...JEAN GREY AND SCOTT SUMMERS!

THEY ARE YOURS.

IN EXCHANGE FOR THE MATERIALS YOUR EMPLOYER GUARANTEED I WOULD RECEIVE.



MEANWHILE,
ABOVE THE
NIGHTTIME SKIES
OVER TEXAS--

--A STOLEN
S.H.I.E.L.D. PERSONNEL
CARRIER--

FOLKS,
WE ARE GOIN'
DOWN!

--RATTLES ITS
WAY TO A
PAINFULLY
OBVIOUS
CONCLUSION...

THE CRAFT'S OCCUPANTS,
THE YOUNG RENEGADE
MUTANTS CALLED
X-FORCE, ACCEPT THE
SITUATION WITH THEIR
USUAL DISCIPLINE...

I *KNEW* THIS
STUPID BUCKET
WOULDN'T
MAKE IT BACK
TO ARIZONA!

C'MON, BOOMER,
WE SHOULD FEEL
BLESSED THAT
THE IPAC
UNIT--

--AND
ALLO' US--

--WERE
ABLE TA
WALK AWAY
FROM OUR FIGHT
WITH X-FACTOR
AT ALL!

THIS BABY'S
TAKEN TOO MANY
HITS. WE'RE GONNA LAND
HARD, UNLESS WE DO
SOMETHIN' NOW--

RIC--

I FOLLOW
YOU, SAM.

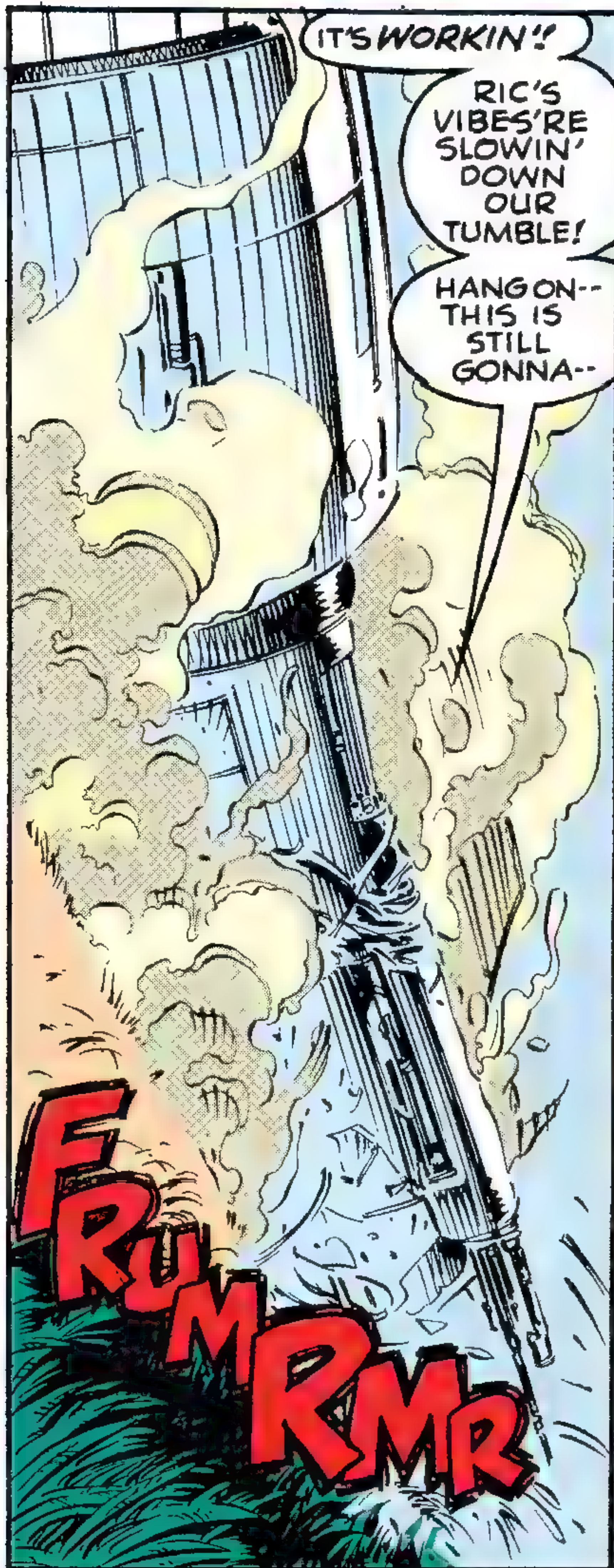
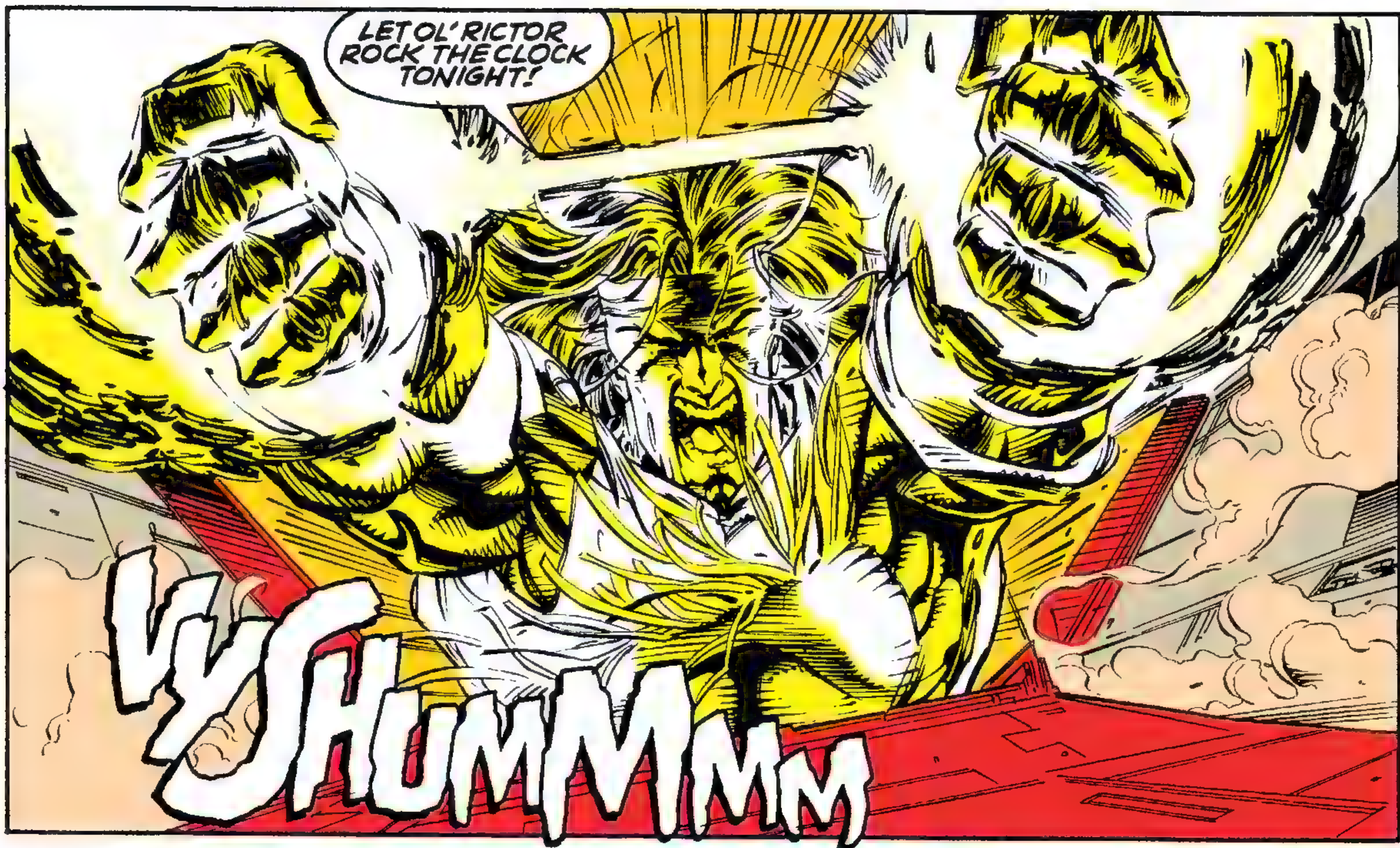
TRY TA
ANGLE YOUR
VIBRATORY
WAVE
ALONG THE
LINES OF
OUR
DESCENT.

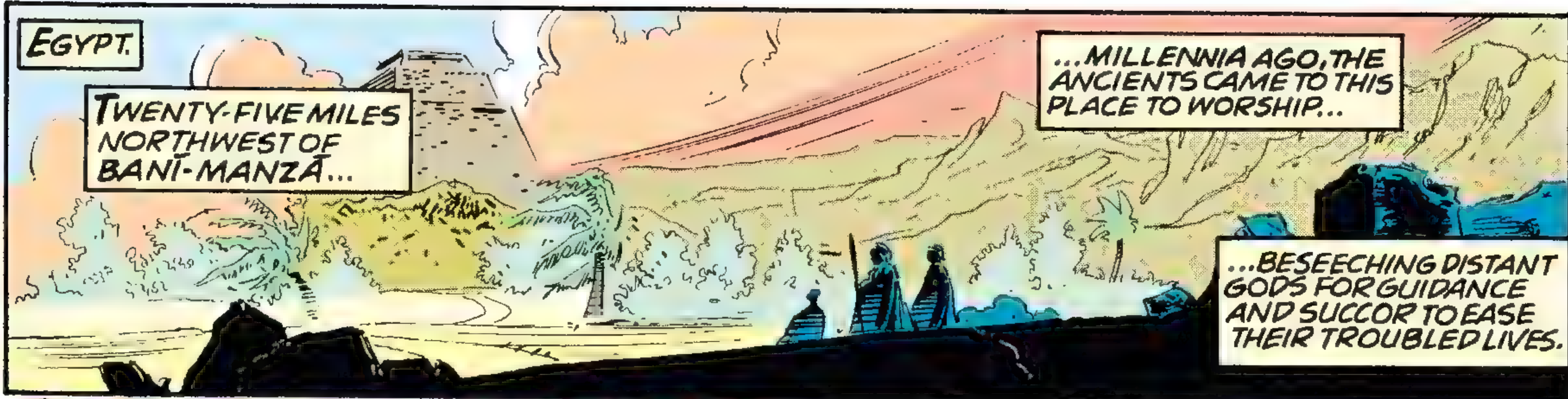
SURE, SAM.
NO
PROBLEM.

ASK ME
TO WORK ON
THAT WORLD
PEACE THING
WHILE YOU'RE
AT IT.

OKAY, LET'S
MAKE THIS
WORK--

FWSHOOMM





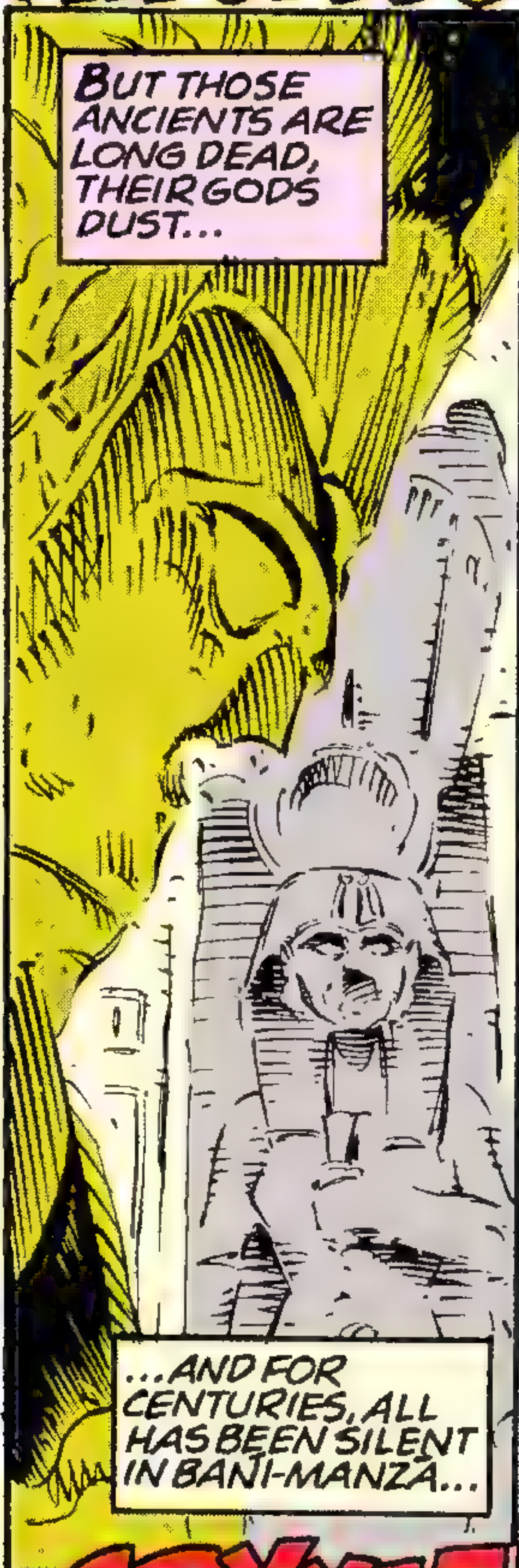
EGYPT.

TWENTY-FIVE MILES
NORTHWEST OF
BANI-MANZĀ...

...MILLENNIA AGO, THE
ANCIENTS CAME TO THIS
PLACE TO WORSHIP...

...BESEECHING DISTANT
GODS FOR GUIDANCE
AND SUCCOR TO EASE
THEIR TROUBLED LIVES.

SHFSFSFS VMMMM



BUT THOSE
ANCIENTS ARE
LONG DEAD,
THEIR GODS
DUST...

...AND FOR
CENTURIES, ALL
HAS BEEN SILENT
IN BANI-MANZĀ...



...UNTIL NOW.



AND NINE SUPPLICANTS
OF A NEW RELIGION...

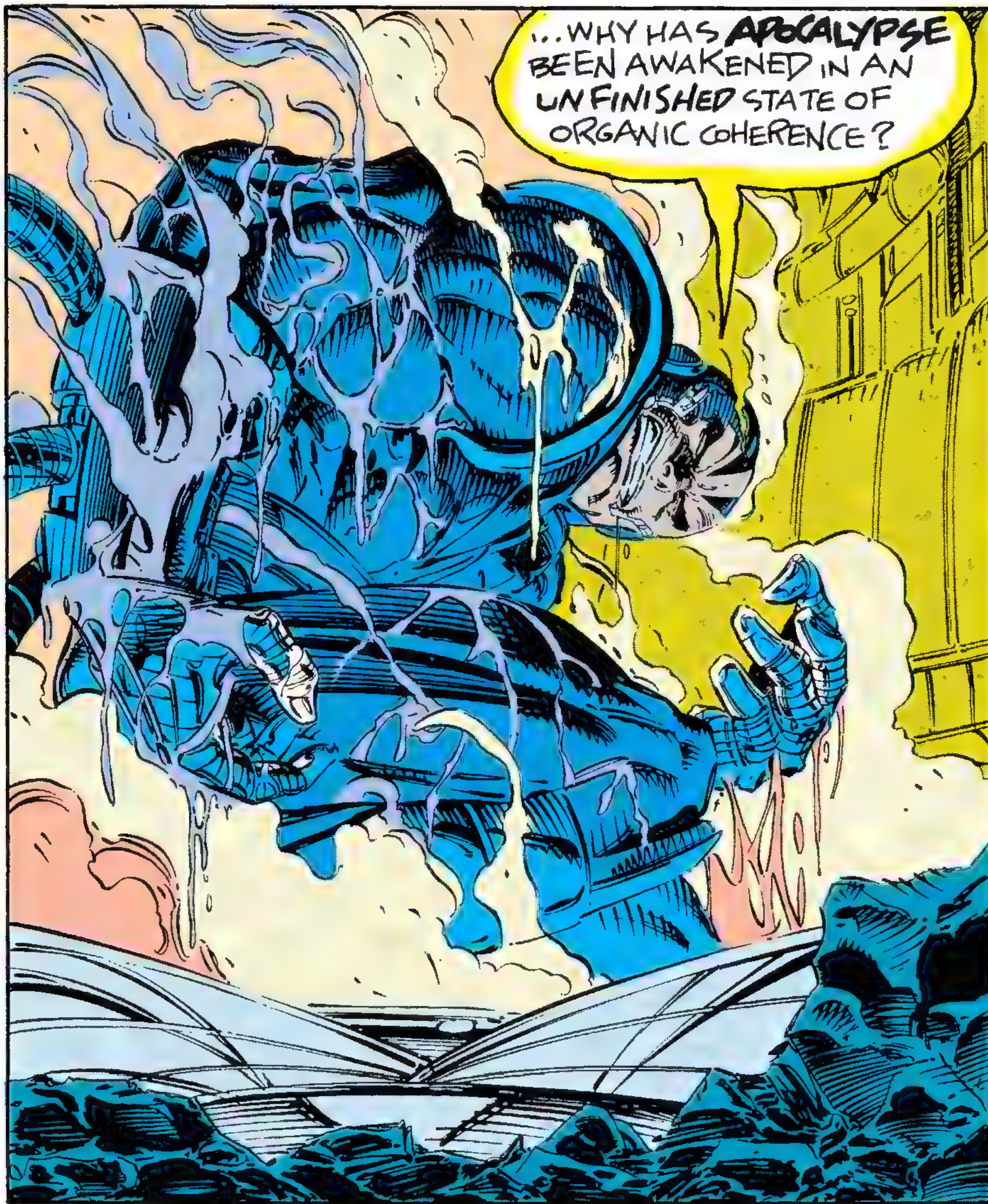
WELCOME BACK,
M'LORD...

...NINE MUTANTS
CALLED THE
DARK RIDERS...

...WITNESS
THE REBIRTH
OF THEIR
GOD.

IT IS TOO
SOON...

CRYEEEECK

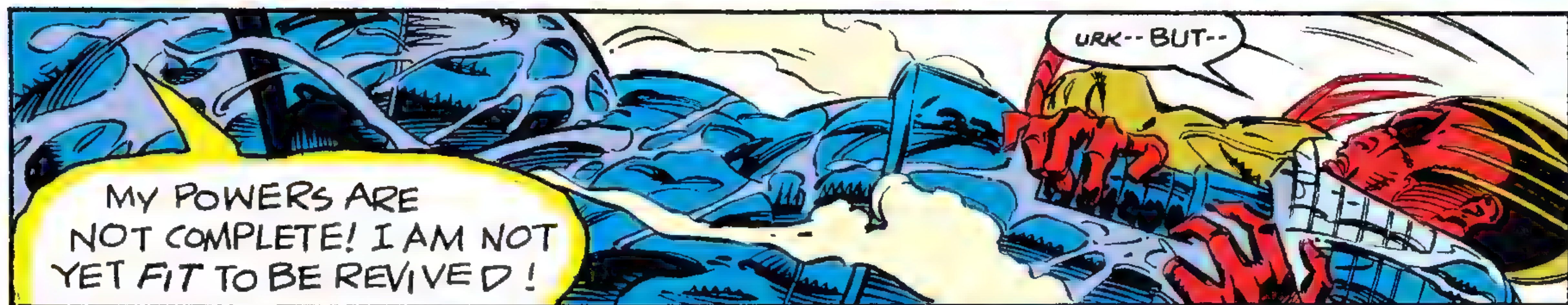


...WHY HAS **APOCALYPSE** BEEN AWAKENED IN AN UNFINISHED STATE OF ORGANIC COHERENCE?



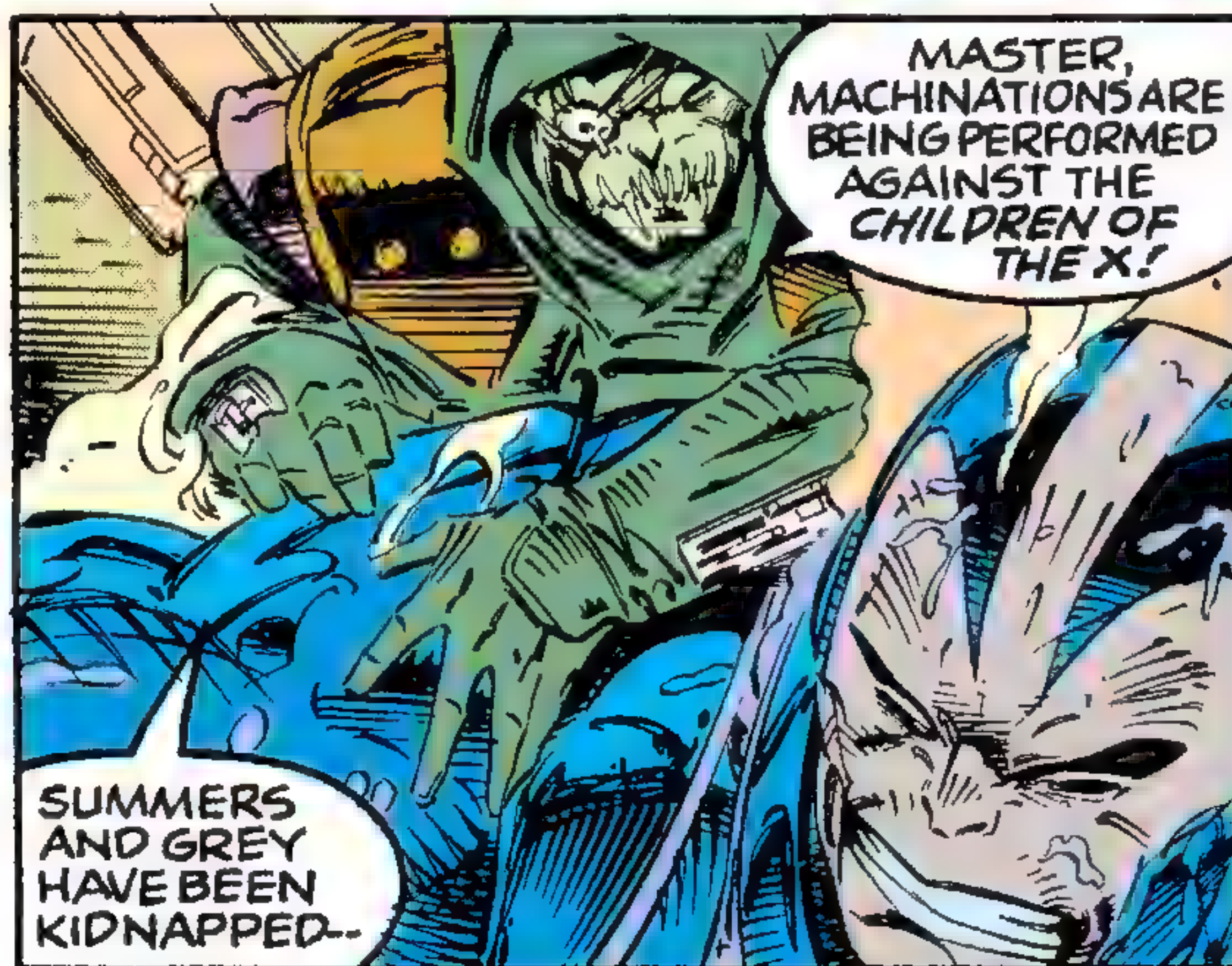
WE HAD TO BRING YOU OUT OF YOUR HEALING STAGE EARLY, BOSS--

--THERE'S **BIG TROUBLE** BREWING!



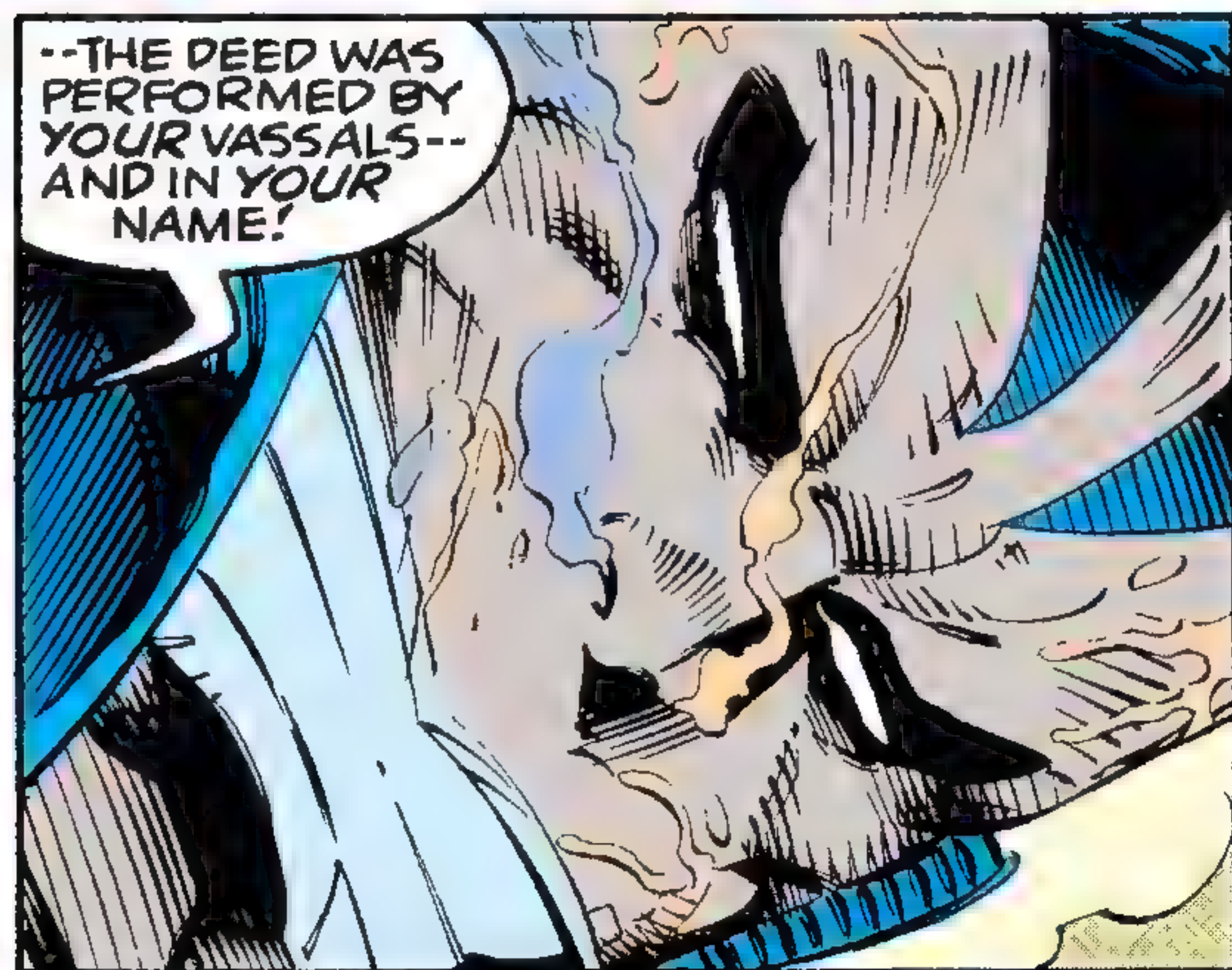
MY POWERS ARE NOT COMPLETE! I AM NOT YET FIT TO BE REVIVED!

URK-- BUT--



MASTER, MACHINATIONS ARE BEING PERFORMED AGAINST THE CHILDREN OF THE X!

SUMMERS AND GREY HAVE BEEN KIDNAPPED--



--THE DEED WAS PERFORMED BY YOUR VASSALS-- AND IN YOUR NAME!

THE IRONY IS NOT LOST ON THE X-MEN AS THEIR BLACKBIRD CRAFT FLIES OVER THE SKIES OF THE MIDWEST TOWARDS A CONFRONTATION WITH X-FORCE

HASN'T THE AREA OF THE UNITED STATES BELOW THEM ALWAYS BEEN CALLED THE "HEARTLAND" OF THE COUNTRY?

A PLACE THE POLITICIANS LAUD FOR ITS "HIGHER VALUES" AND GREATER MORAL INTEGRITY?

IRONIC THEN, THAT THE FIGHT THEY FACE IS, IN MANY WAYS, ONE OF VALUES--ONE OF MORALS...

...A FIGHT AGAINST THE NEXT GENERATION OF MUTANTS--

--TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE METHODS THEY ARE CHOOSING IN THEIR PURSUIT OF XAVIER'S DREAM--

--ARE RIGHT OR WRONG.

IT IS A FIGHT NO ONE ON THIS SLEEK BIRD OF PREY EVER WANTED TO BE A PART OF.

WHAT DO THE SCANNERS TELL US, PSYLOCKE?

CEREBRO HAS PICKED THEM UP.. STOPPED SOMEWHERE IN WEST TEXAS.

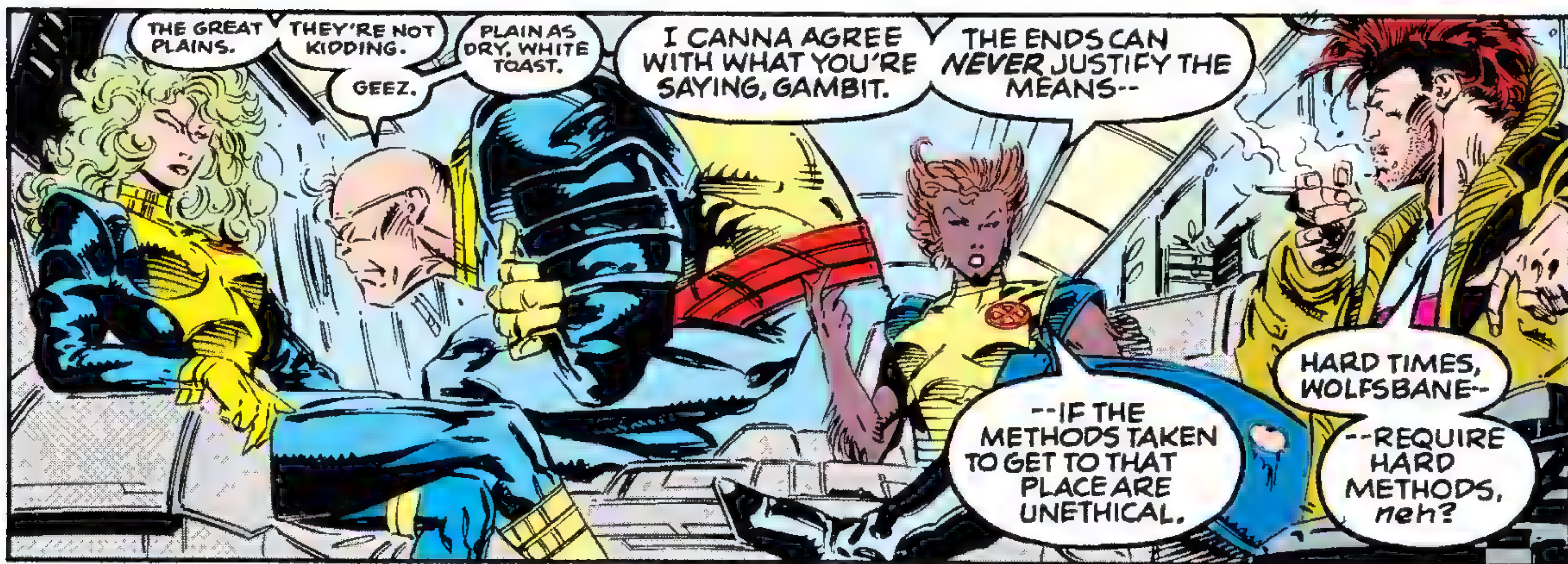
WHY CAN IT DETECT THEM NOW, WHEN IT COULDN'T FOR THE LAST EIGHT MONTHS?

THE PROFESSOR SUSPECTED THAT WHEREVER X-FORCE'S BEEN HOLED UP--

--CABLE HAD SOME KINDA SENSORY SCREENS WHICH BLOCKED CEREBRO'S SCANNIN' WAVELENGTHS.

THEN WHAT'S HAPPENED TO FORCE THEM OUT OF THEIR HIDING PLACE?

AND WHY DO I GET THE FEELING THE KIDS IN X-FORCE HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE AGENDA CABLE HAS ESTABLISHED?



THE GREAT PLAINS.

THEY'RE NOT KIDDING.

PLAIN AS DRY, WHITE TOAST.

GEEZ.

I CANNA AGREE WITH WHAT YOU'RE SAYING, GAMBIT.

THE ENDS CAN NEVER JUSTIFY THE MEANS--

HARD TIMES, WOLFSBANE--

--IF THE METHODS TAKEN TO GET TO THAT PLACE ARE UNETHICAL.

--REQUIRE HARD METHODS, neh?

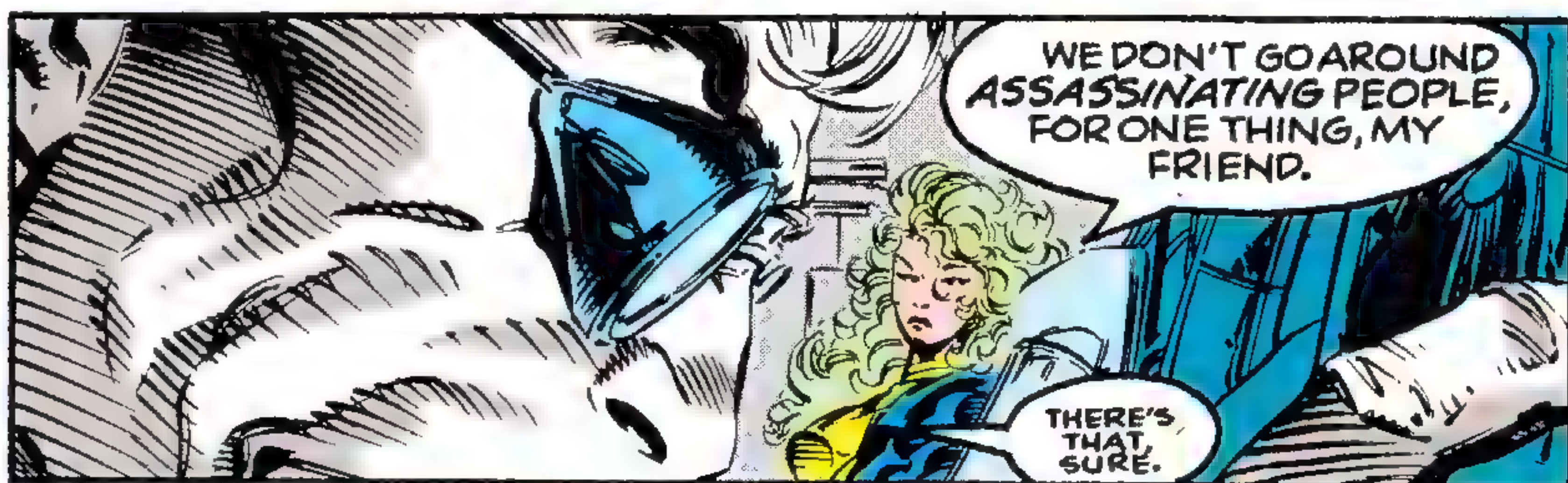


THAT'S EASIER SAID THAN DONE.

COME NOW, CHERIE--

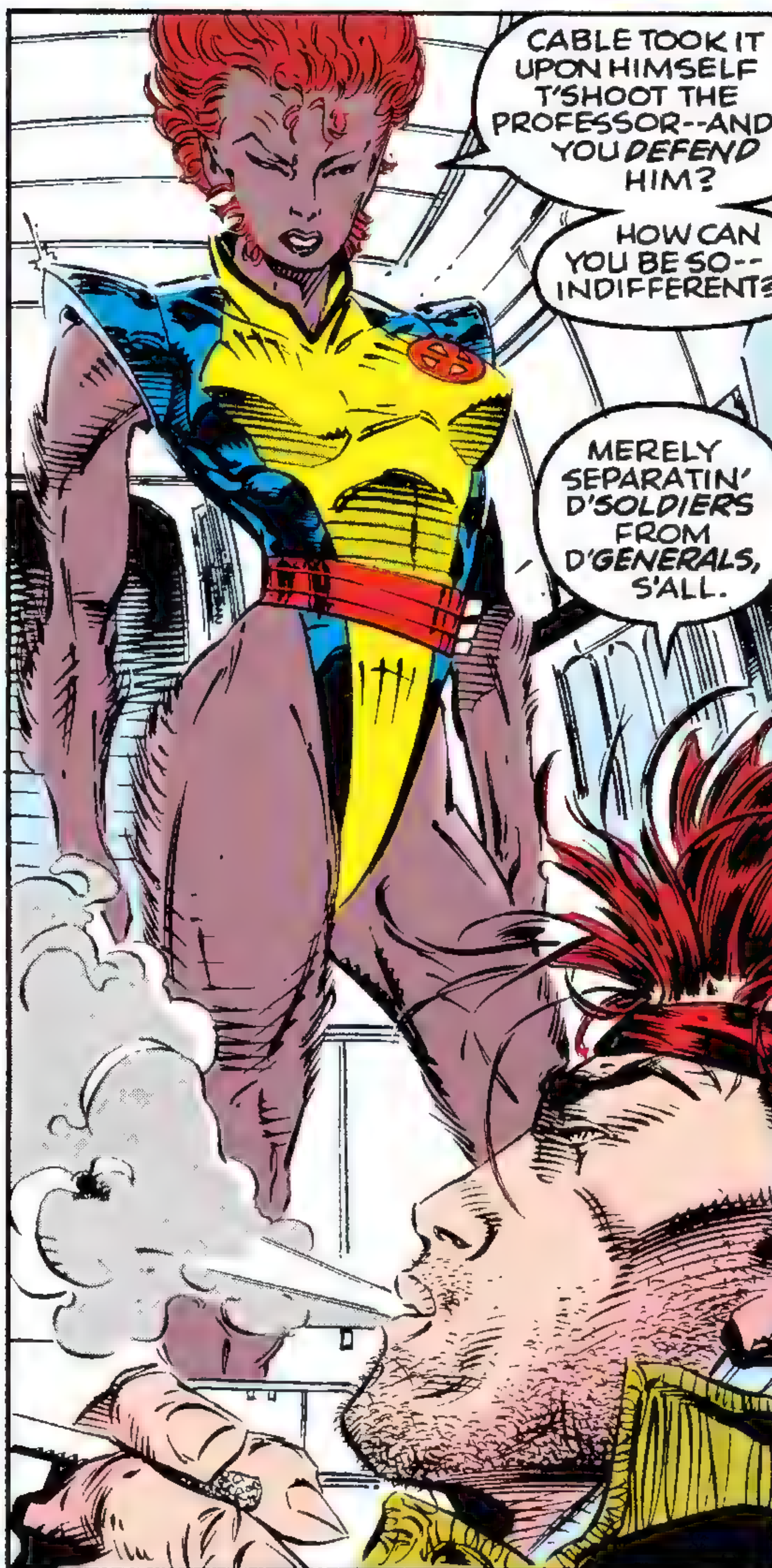
--WHAT 'SACTLY HAS X-FORCE DONE IN DE TIME DEY BEEN TOGETHER--

--DAT'S BEEN SO DIFFERENT THAN WHAT WE DO?



WE DON'T GO AROUND ASSASSINATING PEOPLE, FOR ONE THING, MY FRIEND.

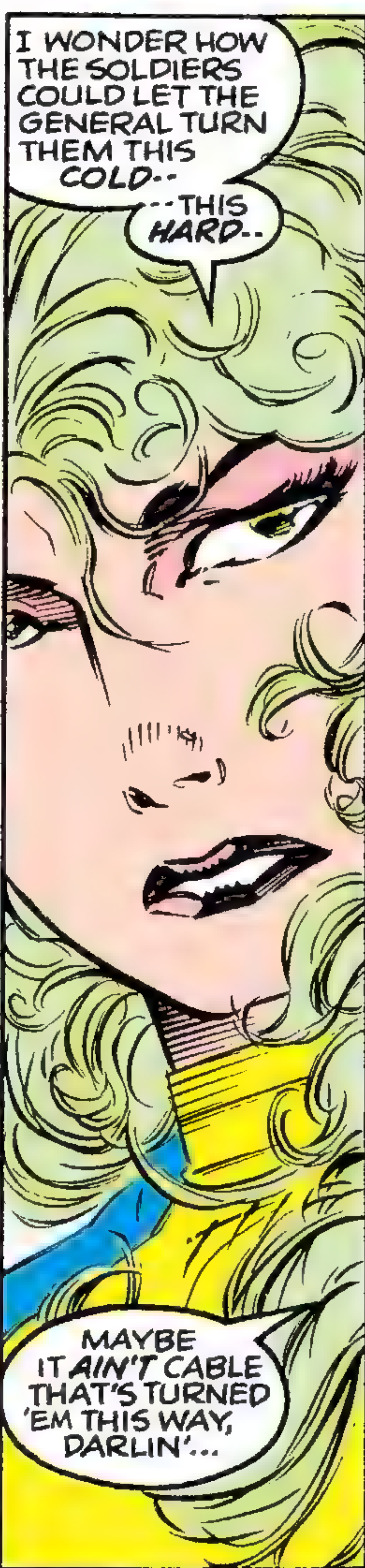
THERE'S THAT, SURE.



CABLE TOOK IT UPON HIMSELF T'SHOOT THE PROFESSOR--AND YOU DEFEND HIM?

HOW CAN YOU BE SO--INDIFFERENT?

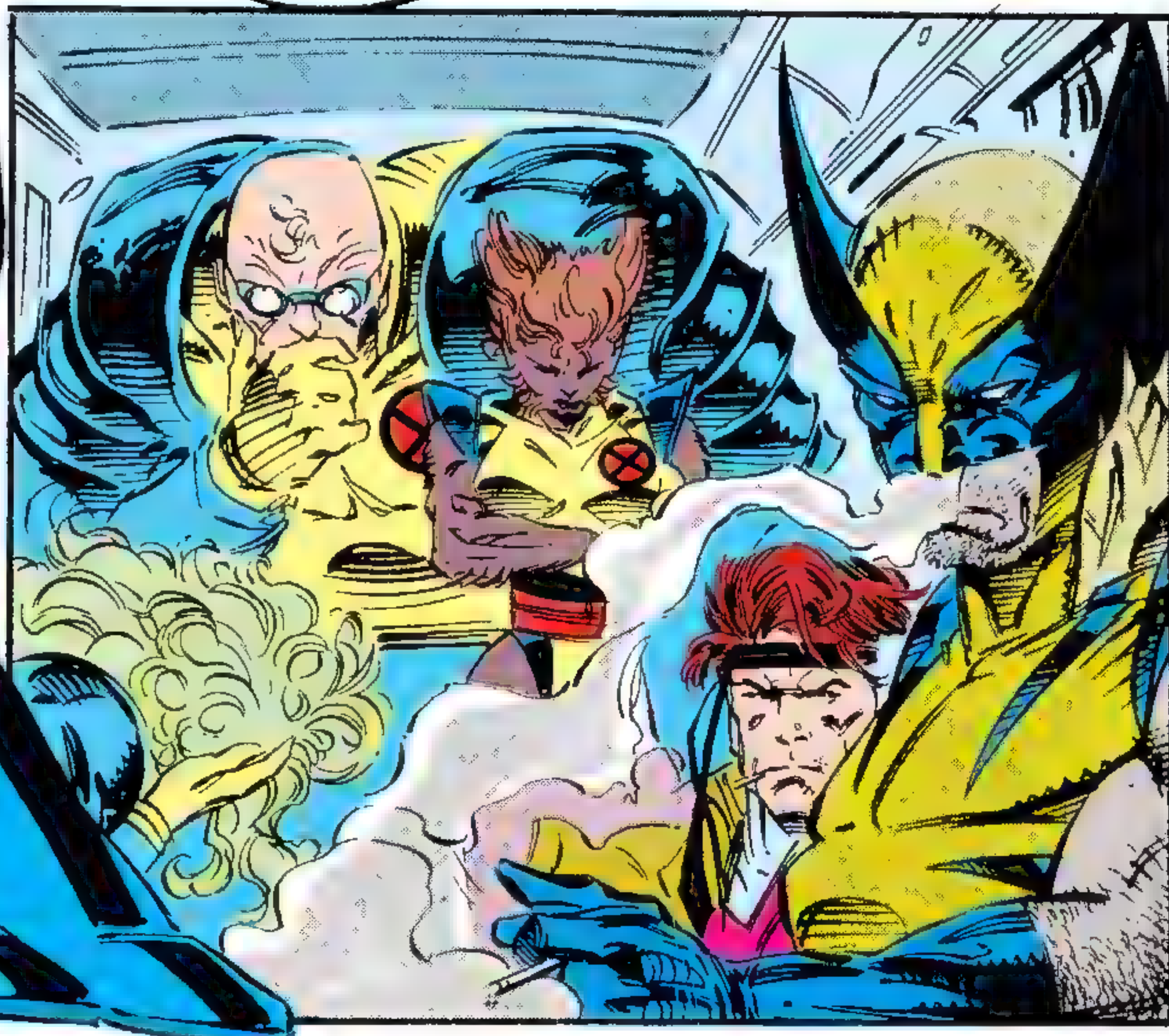
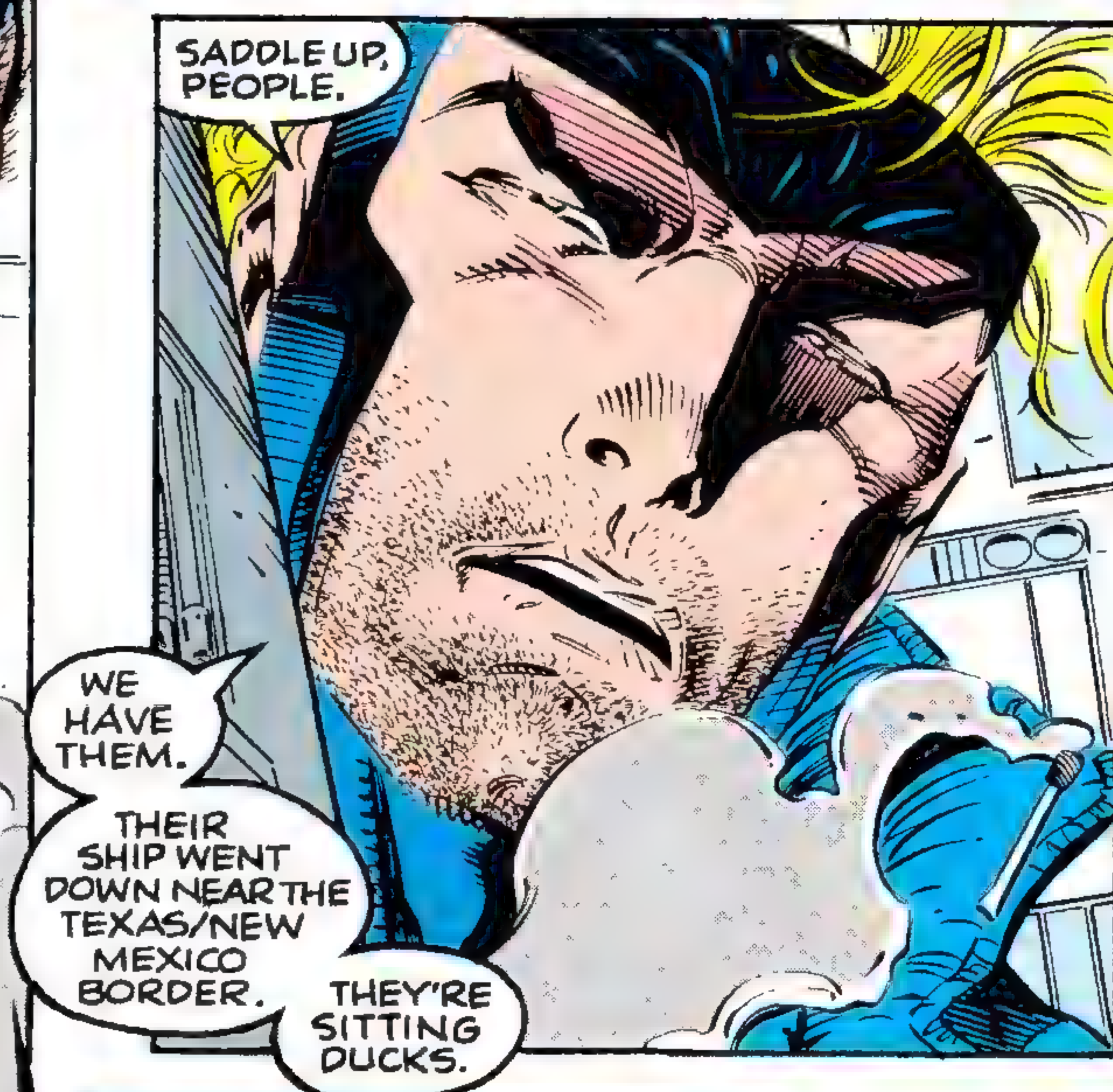
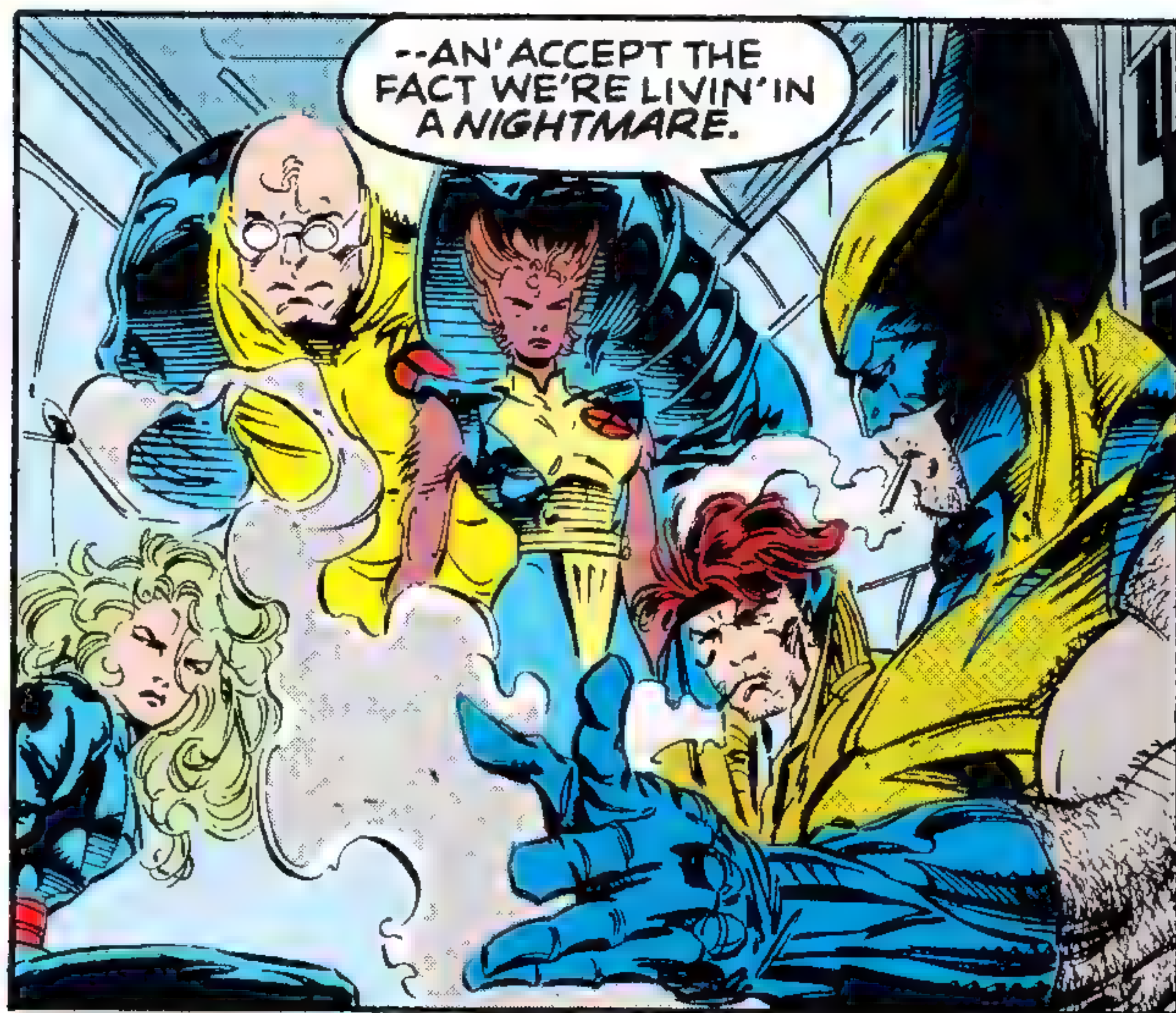
MERELY SEPARATIN' D'SOLDIERS FROM D'GENERALS, S'ALL.



I WONDER HOW THE SOLDIERS COULD LET THE GENERAL TURN THEM THIS COLD--

--THIS HARD--

MAYBE IT AIN'T CABLE THAT'S TURNED 'EM THIS WAY, DARLIN'...



SOMEWHERE ABOVE MAN-KIND...

...COMES A MAN WHO HAS, IN MANY WAYS--

--CHOSEN TO PLACE HIMSELF IN THIS HIGH PLACE.

THE IRONY BEING, THAT IN ORDER TO SAVE HIS PEOPLE, HE HAS ABANDONED THEM.

WHIRRR SHINK

Temporal displacement activated

On line

VRREEEEMMMMM

Temporal displacement processing:

VUM VUM VUM VUM

Welcome back to Graymalkin, Nathan.

PROFESSOR

WHY DOES THE TRIP HERE

TAKE SO MUCH MORE OUT OF ME--

--THAN THE TRIP THERE--?

That is a redundant question, Nathan. I have --

I KNOW, I KNOW--IT'S ALL PHYSICS...

...TALK LOWER, WILL YOU--

--I HAVE A HANGOVER.

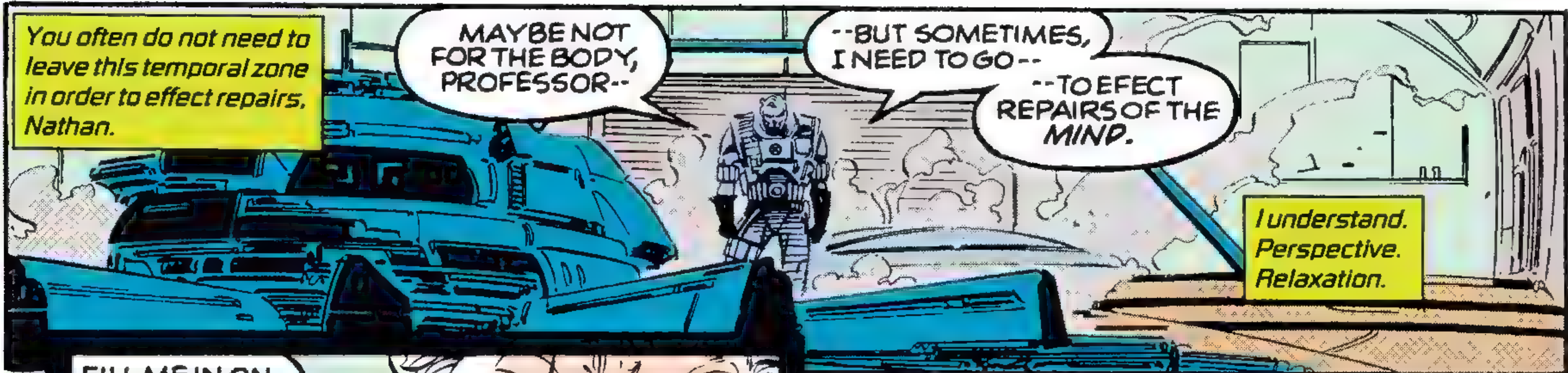
You were only gone a short time, Nathan.

TWENTY SIX DAYS YOUR TIME, PROFESSOR--

--ELEVEN MONTHS MINE!

YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW HARD IT'S GOTTEN TO SURVIVE--

--TOMORROW...



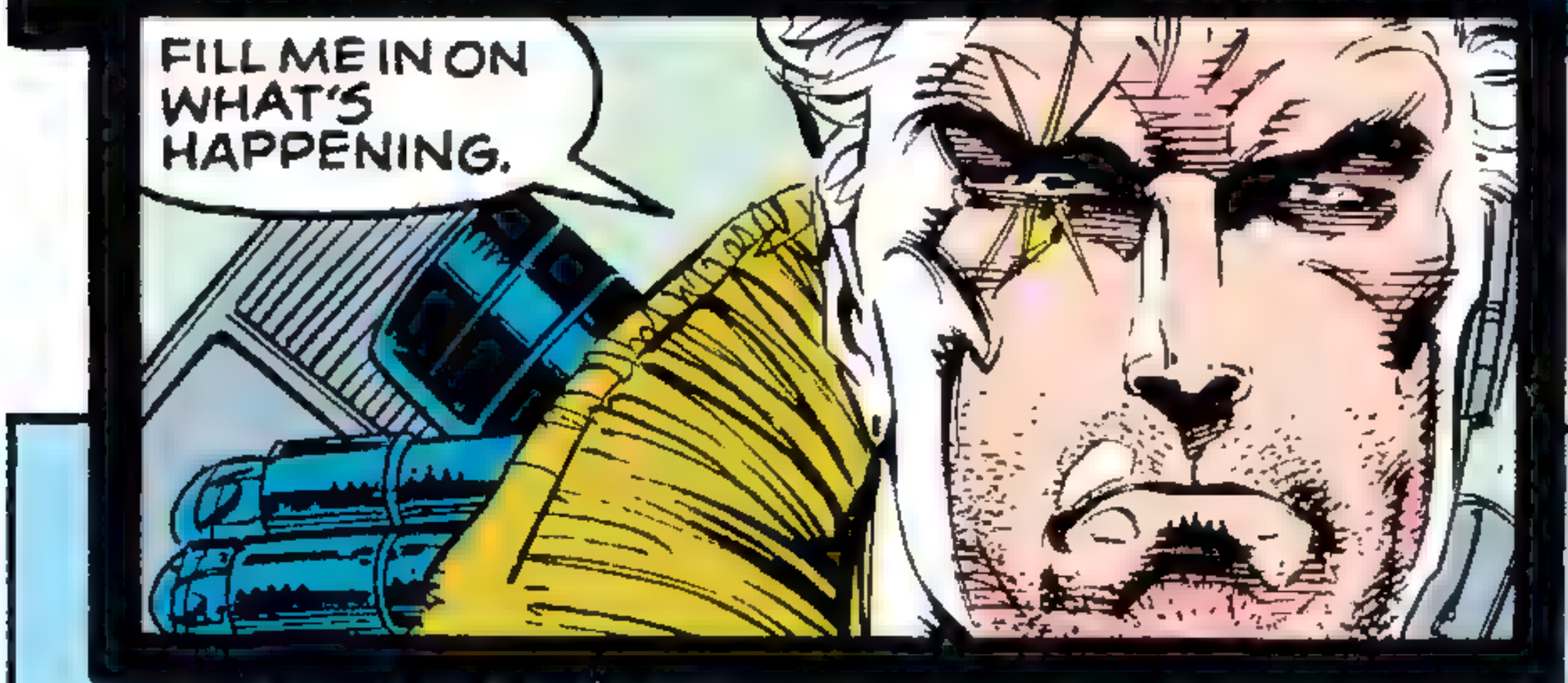
You often do not need to leave this temporal zone in order to effect repairs, Nathan.

MAYBE NOT FOR THE BODY, PROFESSOR--

--BUT SOMETIMES, I NEED TO GO--

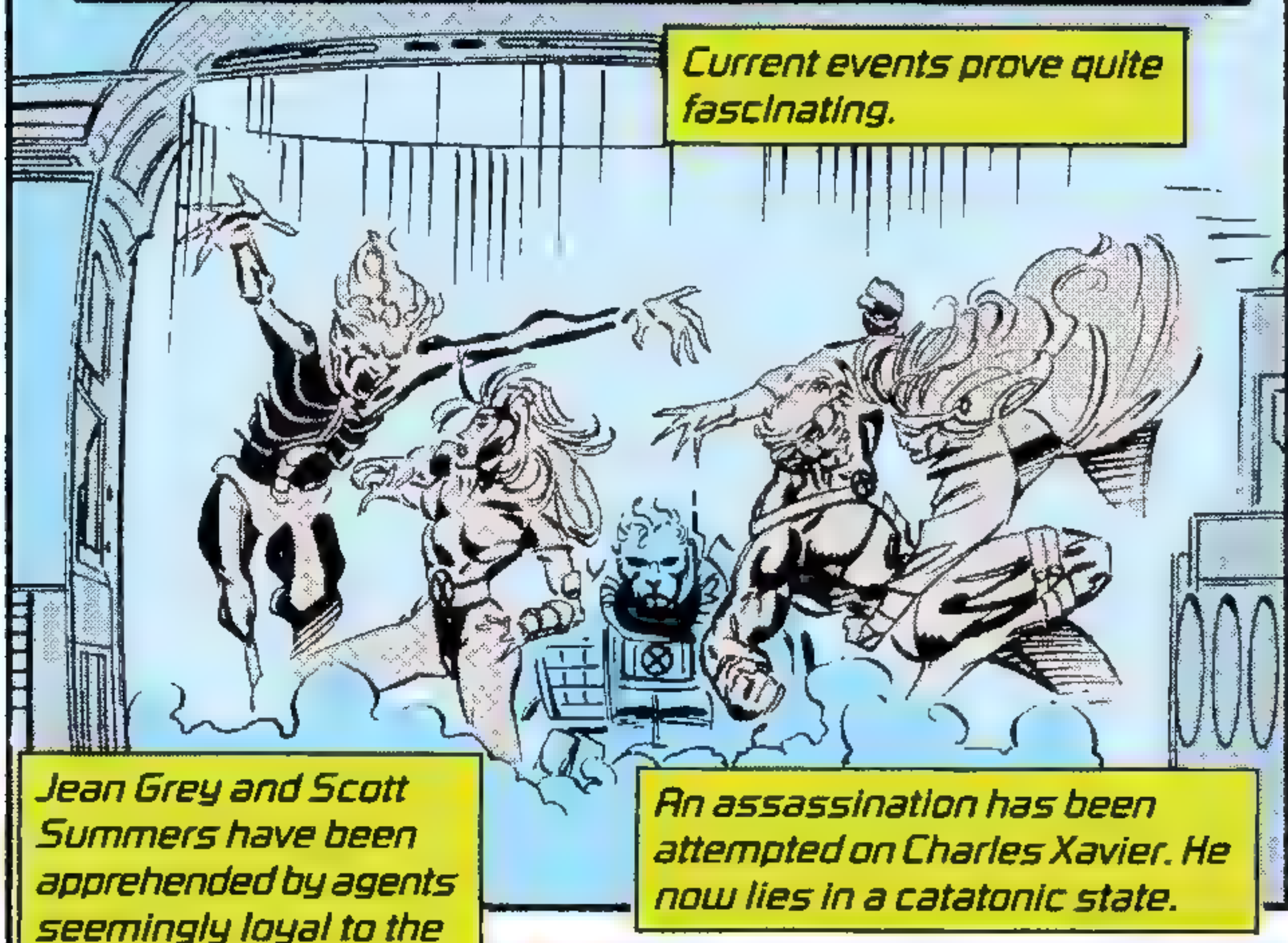
--TO EFFECT REPAIRS OF THE MIND.

I understand. Perspective. Relaxation.



FILL ME IN ON WHAT'S HAPPENING.

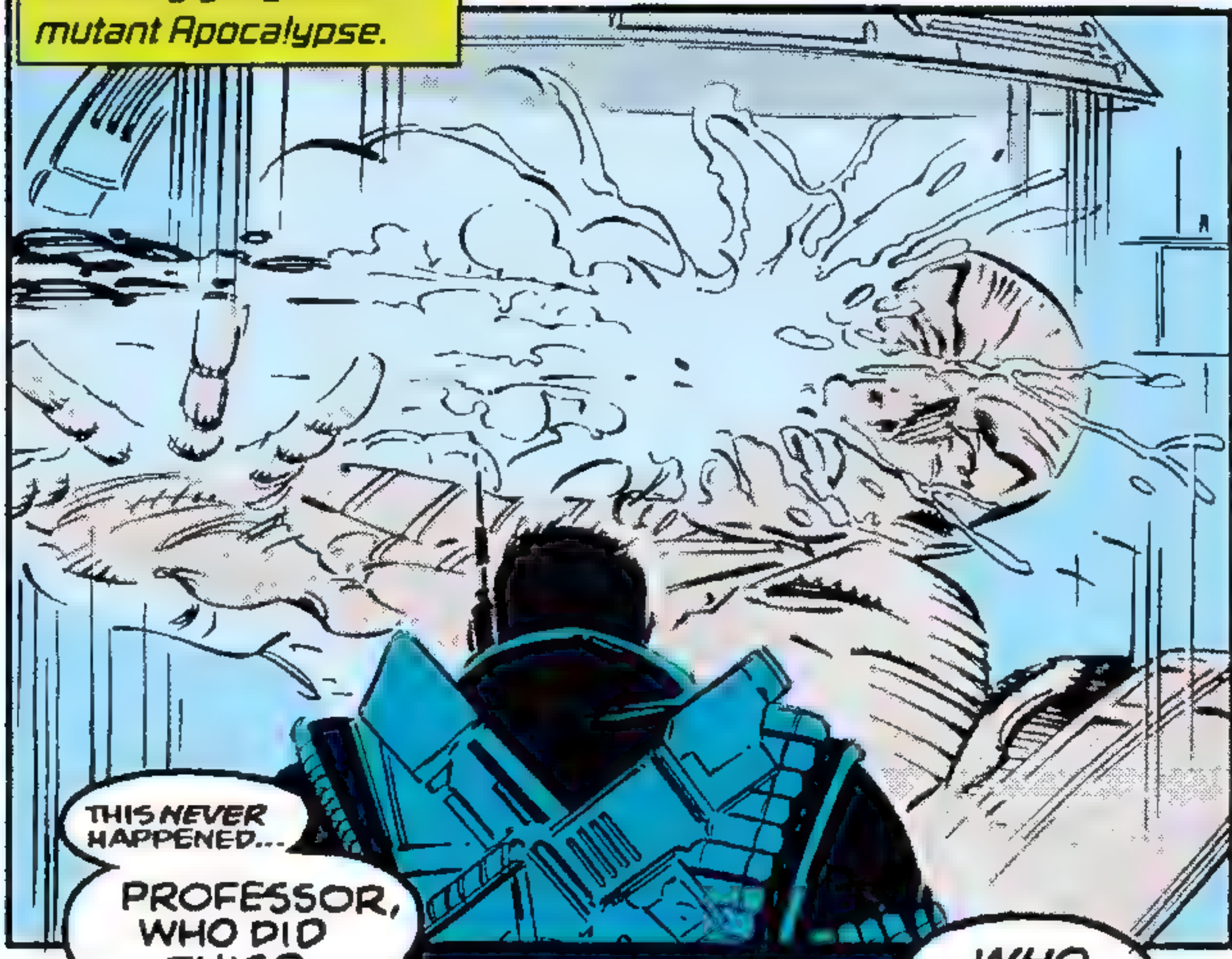
Well, regardless of the illogical nature of the evidence presented, Nathan, it would appear —



Current events prove quite fascinating.

Jean Grey and Scott Summers have been apprehended by agents seemingly loyal to the mutant Apocalypse.

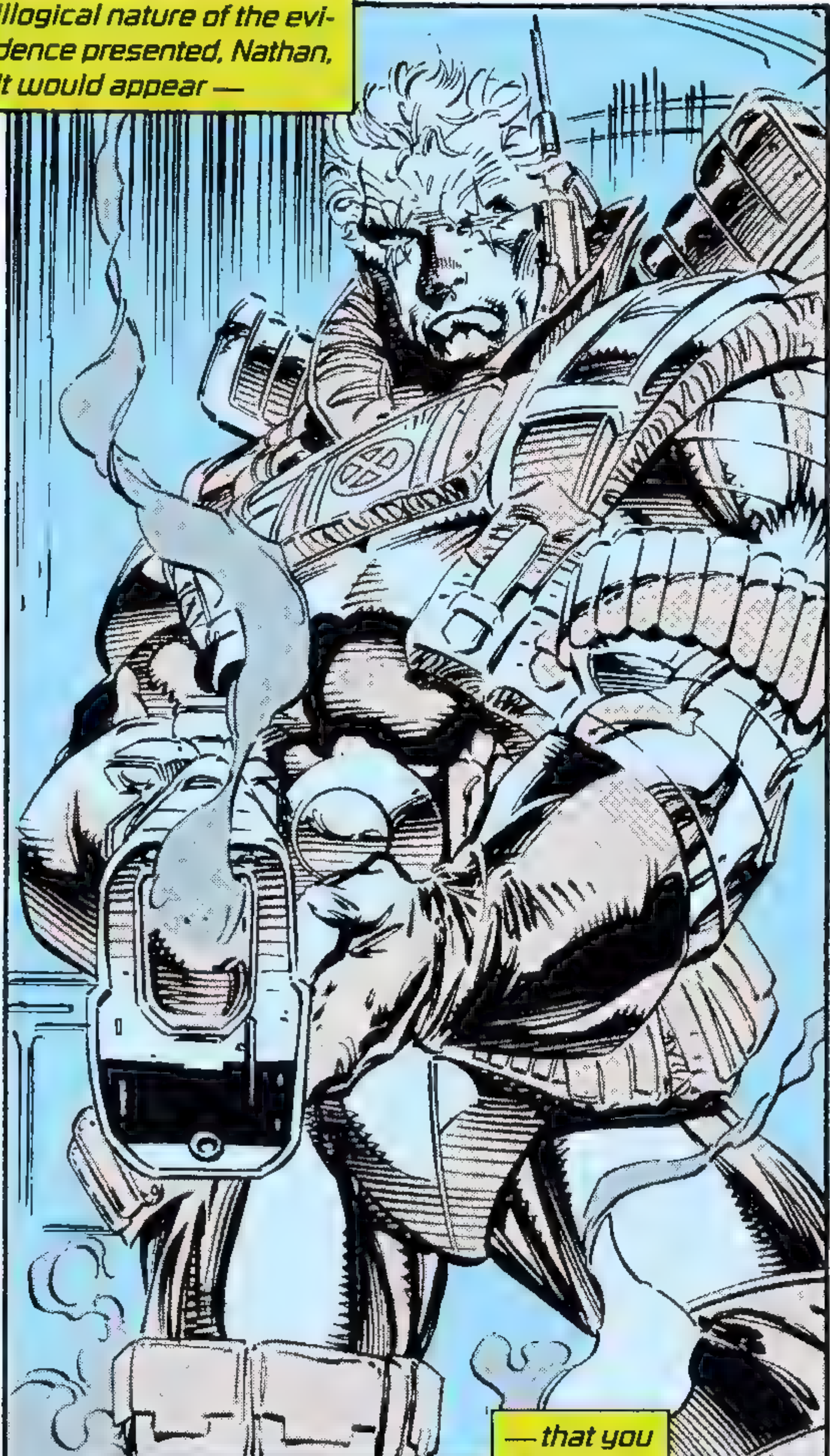
An assassination has been attempted on Charles Xavier. He now lies in a catatonic state.



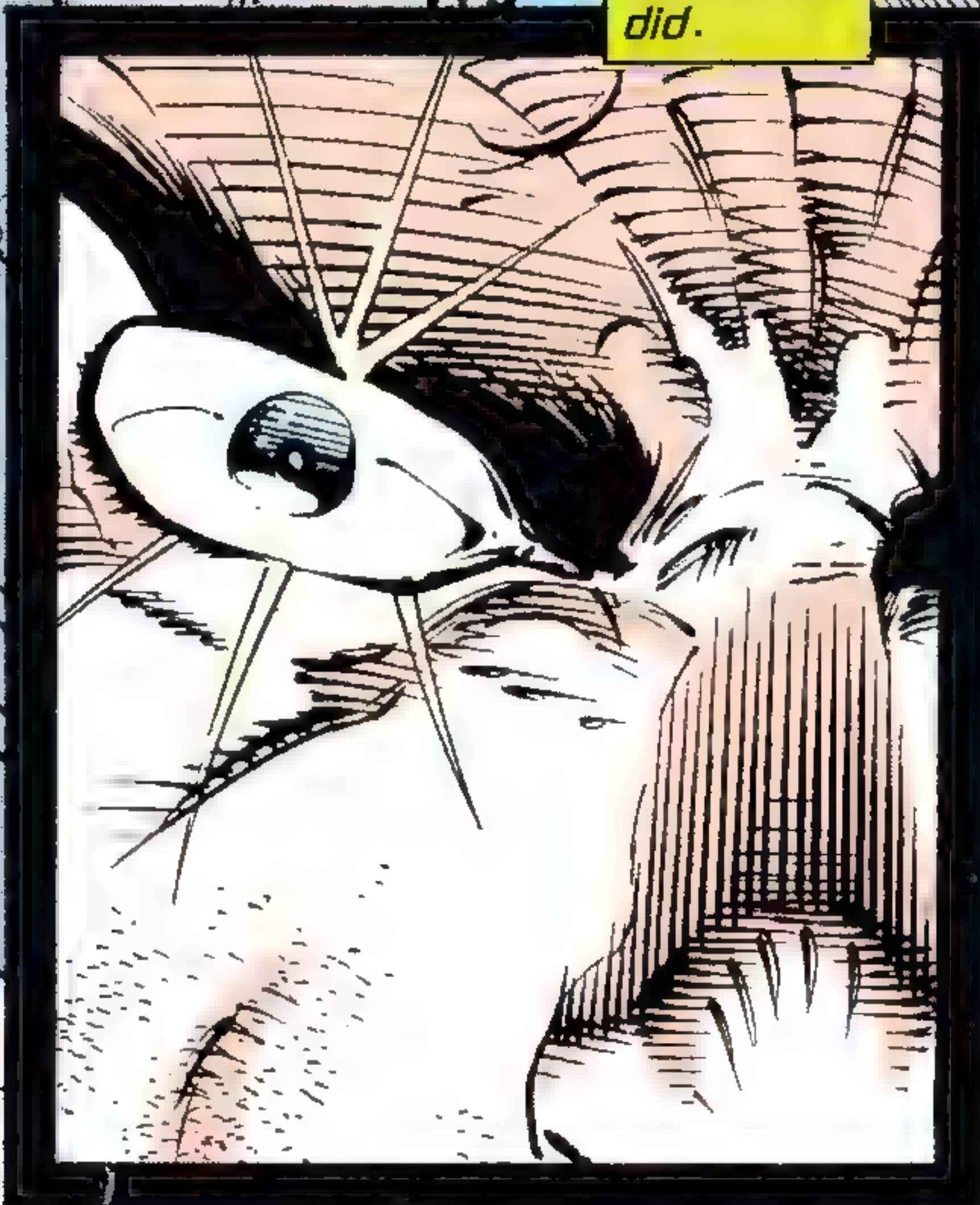
THIS NEVER HAPPENED...

PROFESSOR, WHO DID THIS?

WHO SHOT XAVIER?



— that you did.



A NEW DAY'S SUN
CREASES THE
HORIZON BEHIND
XAVIER'S MANSION
IN WESTCHESTER,
NEW YORK.

A NEW DAY
DAWNING--

--ON WHAT
COULD BE
CHARLES
XAVIER'S
LAST DAY
ON EARTH.

COFFEE--
STALE MUFFIN.
YUM-YUM.

NOT WHILE I AM ON
DUTY, JUBILATION.

LISTEN,
BISHOP, OL'
ROCK--

--I DON'T
SEE THIS SIDE
OF SUNRISE
TOO OFTEN,
Y'KNOW--

--SO HUMOR
MEAN' RELAX
A LITTLE,
OKAY?

I APOLOGIZE,
CHILD, BUT PROFESSOR
XAVIER WAS ATTACKED
AND I FAILED TO
PREVENT IT.

YOU HAVE NO
IDEA HOW HARD
THAT IS FOR ME
TO ACCEPT!

LISTEN,
YOU BEEN SULKIN'
AROUND ALL
NIGHT LONG--

--CATCH
SOME WINKS, LET
THE MANSION'S SECURITY
DO THE WORK FOR
A WHILE--

--YOU
COULD USE SOME
SHUT-EYE.

JUBILATION...
I WILL NOT REST
UNTIL I AM CERTAIN
XAVIER IS SAFE.

JUBIL

AND THAT OCCURENCE WILL NOT BE A CERTAINTY UNTIL HIS ASSASIN IS DEAD AND BURIED!



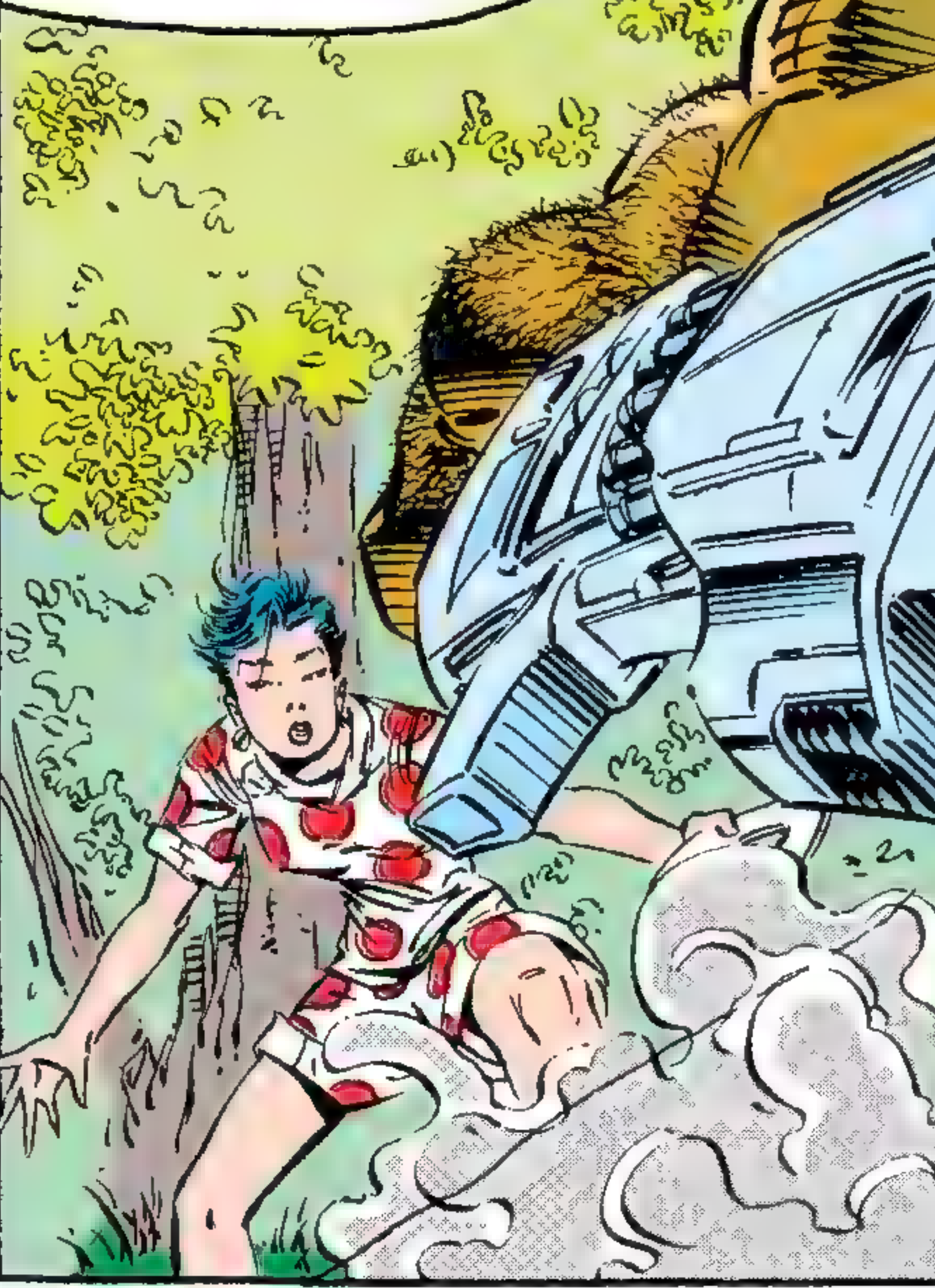
YEAH, WELL, NOW I CAN SEE WHY IT'D BE MOST TRULY HEINOUS--

--IF YOU GAVE YOURSELF A BREAK--

--TO HAVE A CUP'A JUBILEE JAVA.

PARTY ON, BISHOP.

A PERIMETER BREACH! HOW CAN THIS BE?!

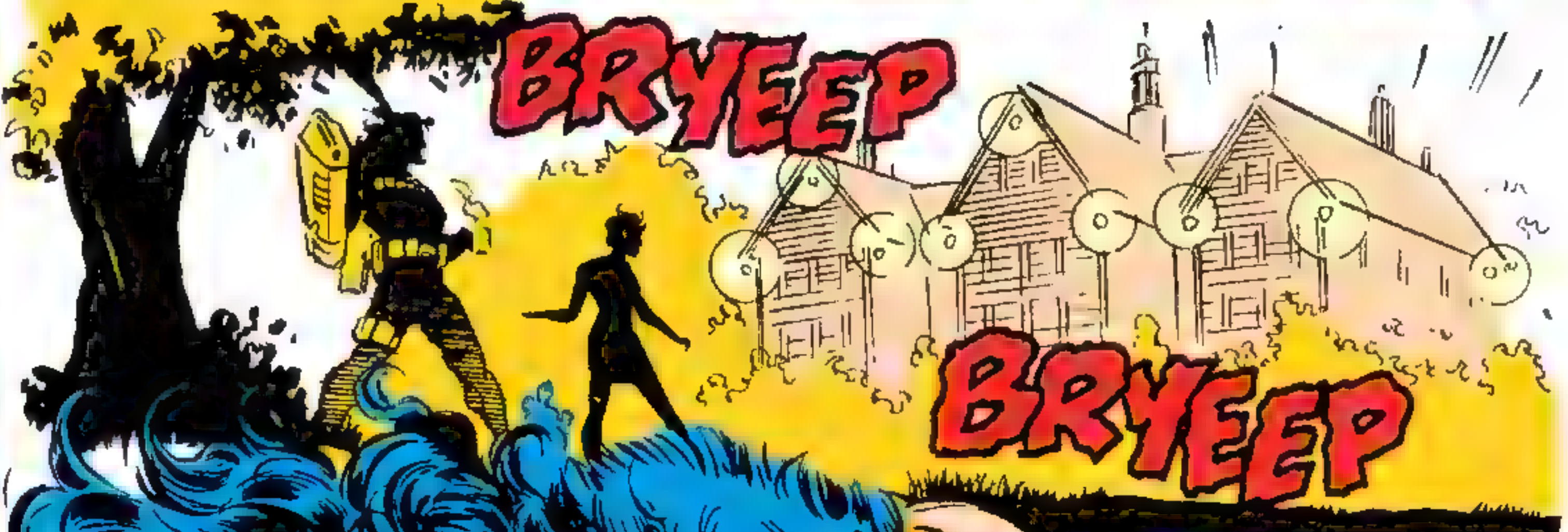


JUBILATION...
...IT'S GOOD.

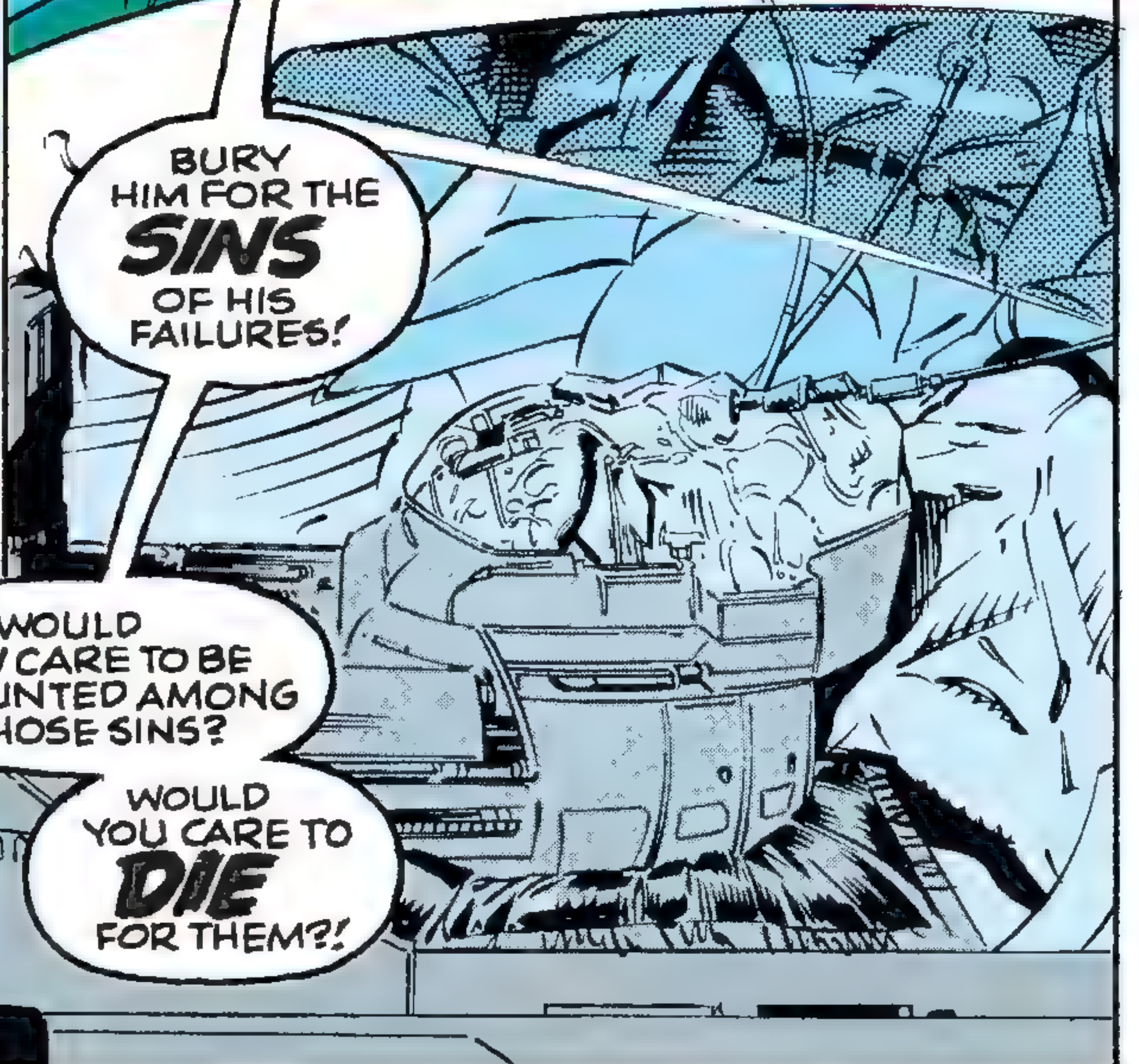
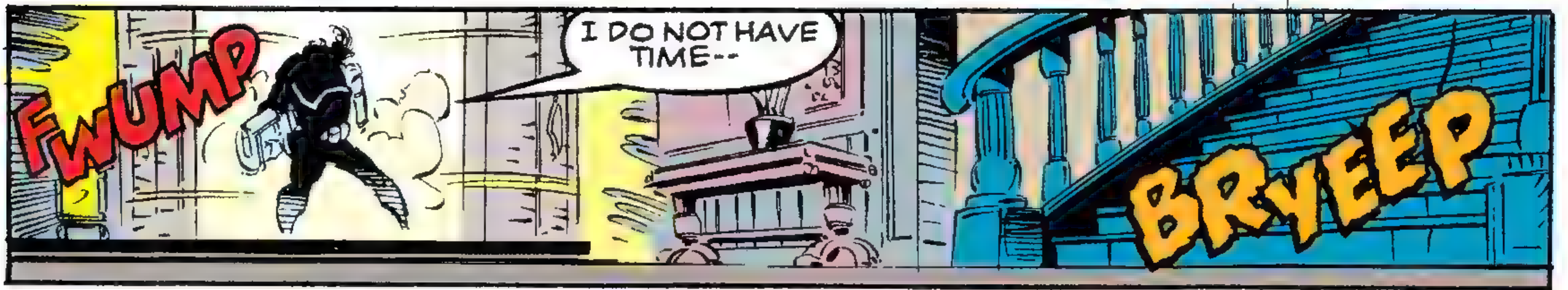
THANK YOU.



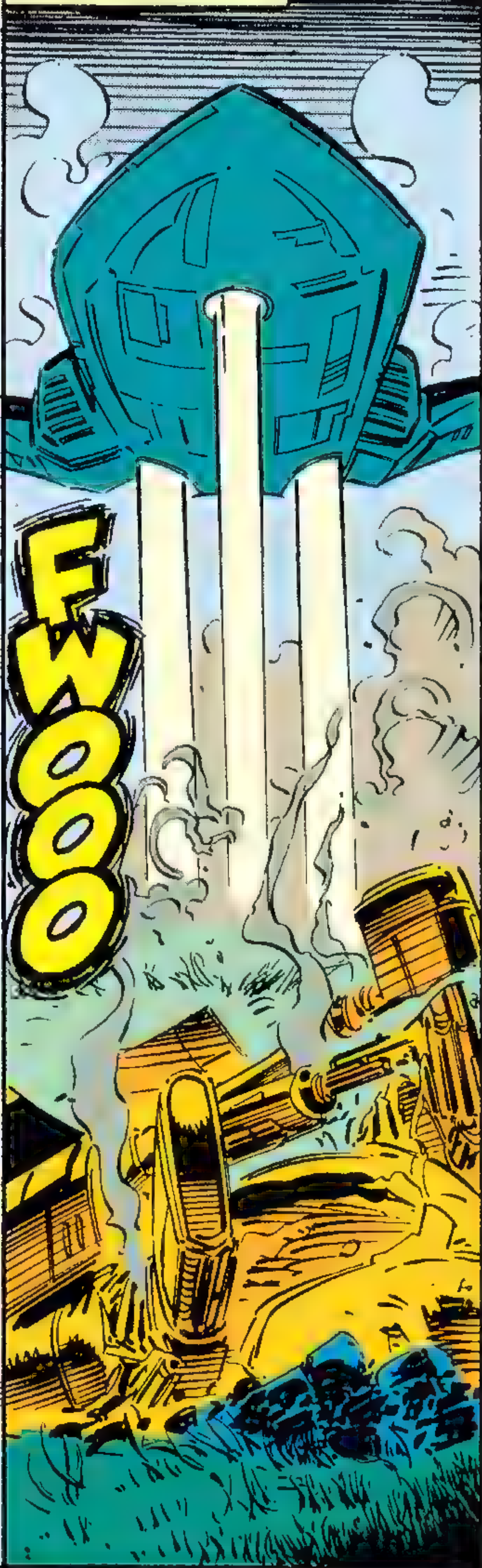
UMMM...SURE, DUDE-- NO PROBLEMA.



SOMEONE IS INSIDE THE MANSION!!



SOMEWHERE IN
WEST TEXAS...



THIS IS IT,
PEOPLE.

TWO
GROUPS
SPLIT
UP--

--ROGUE
AND I HAVE
THE CEREBRO
DETECTORS,
SO FOLLOW
US--

--MANEUVER
ALONG THE IPAC
UNIT FROM EITHER
SIDE--

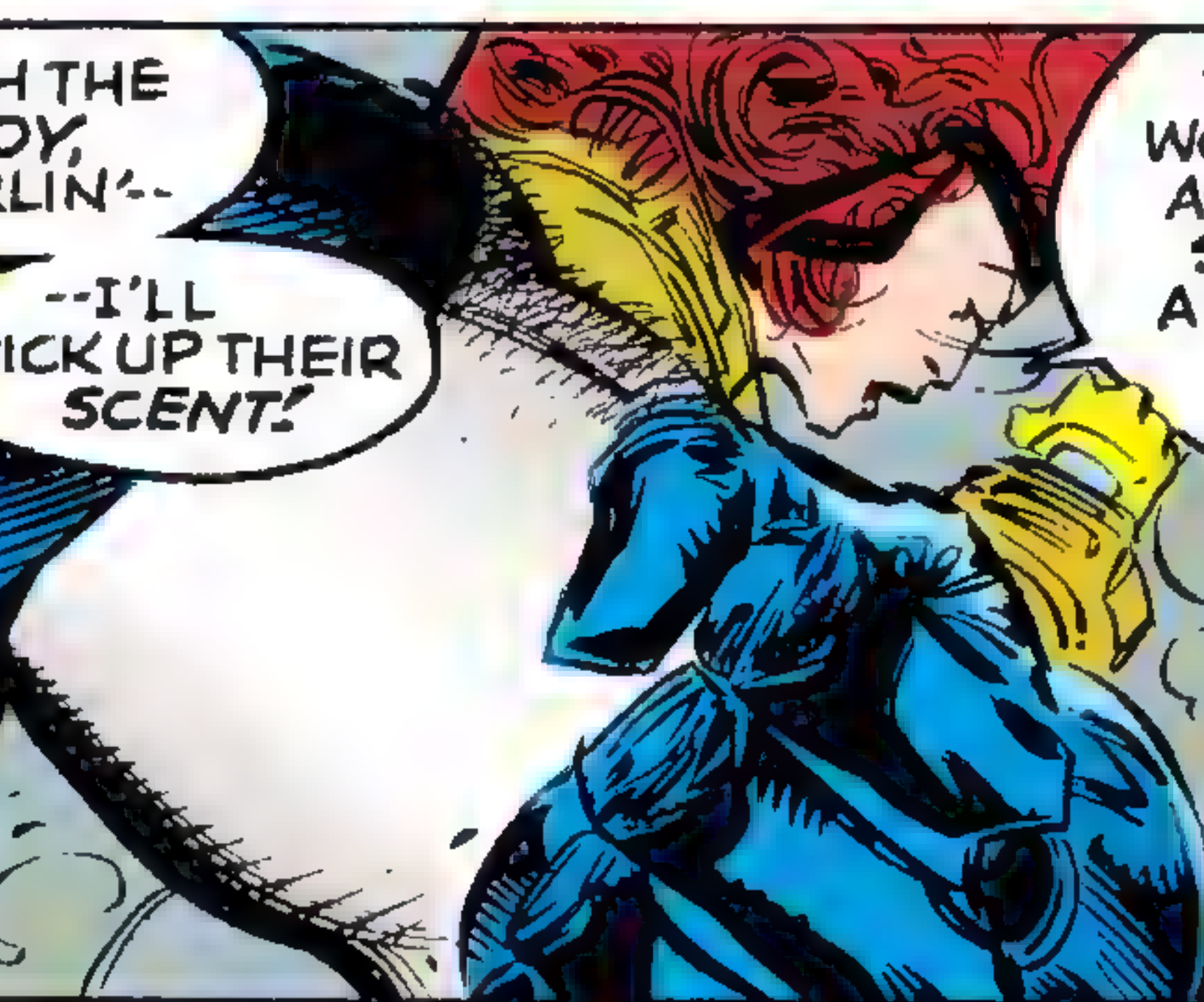
--IF THEY'RE
HERE--

--WE'LL
PINCH THEM
OFF AND PIN
THEM DOWN.

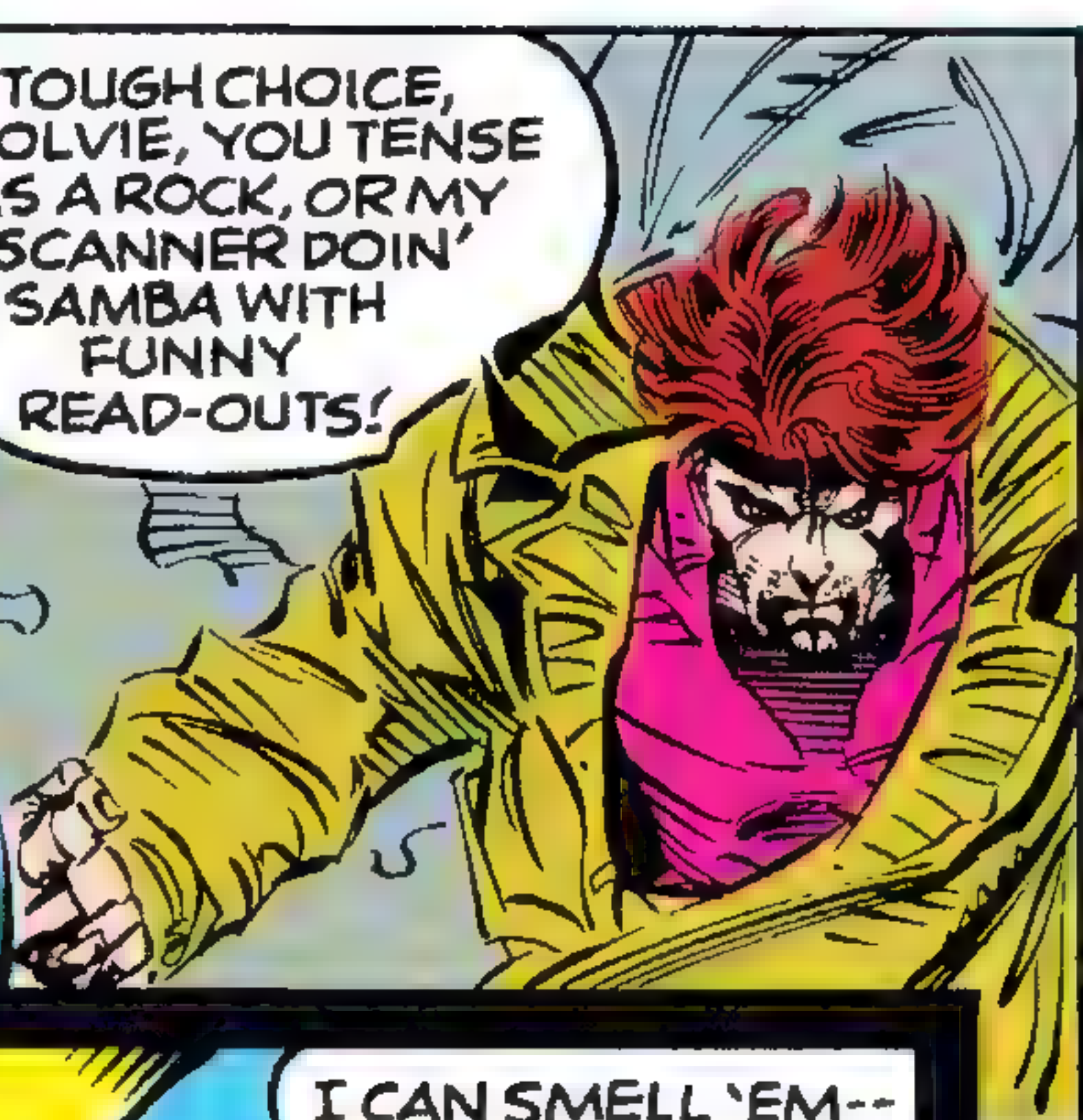


DITCH THE
TOY,
DARLIN'--

--I'LL
PICK UP THEIR
SCENT!



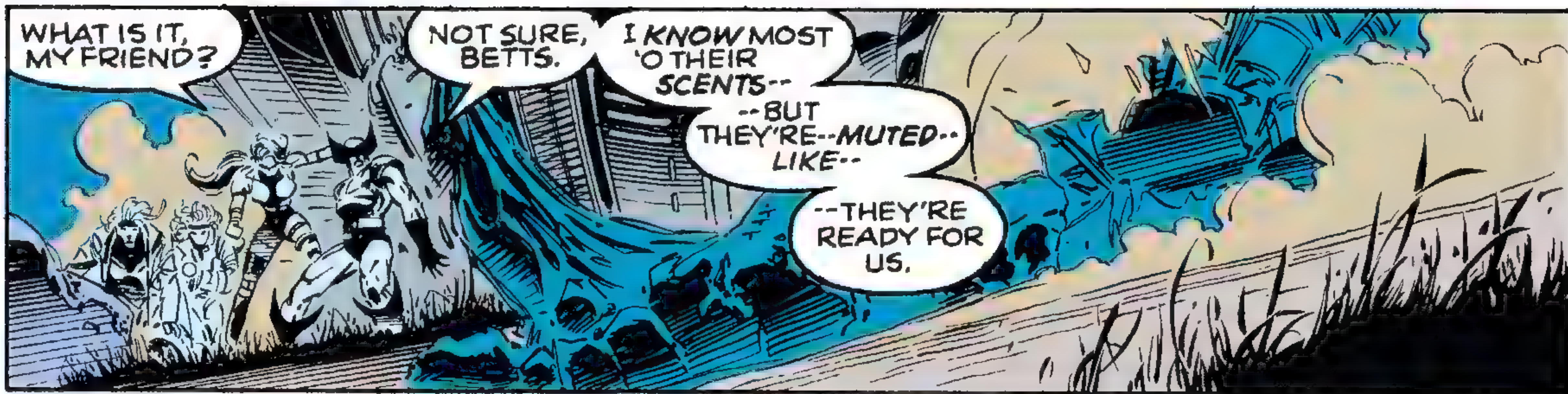
TOUGH CHOICE,
WOLVIE, YOU TENSE
AS A ROCK, OR MY
SCANNER DOIN'
A SAMBA WITH
FUNNY
READ-OUTS!



I CAN SMELL 'EM--

--BUT
SOMETHIN'S
NOT
RIGHT...





WHAT IS IT, MY FRIEND?

NOT SURE, BETTS.

I KNOW MOST 'O THEIR SCENTS--

--BUT THEY'RE--MUTED--LIKE--

--THEY'RE READY FOR US.



ARE YOU SAYING THESE CHILDREN PLAN TO AMBUSH US?

STOP THINKIN' OF THEM AS KIDS, BETTS,

WE'RE UP AGAINST SOLDIERS HERE!



NOTHING ON THE STARBOARD SIDE.

I THINK WOLVIE'S RIGHT.

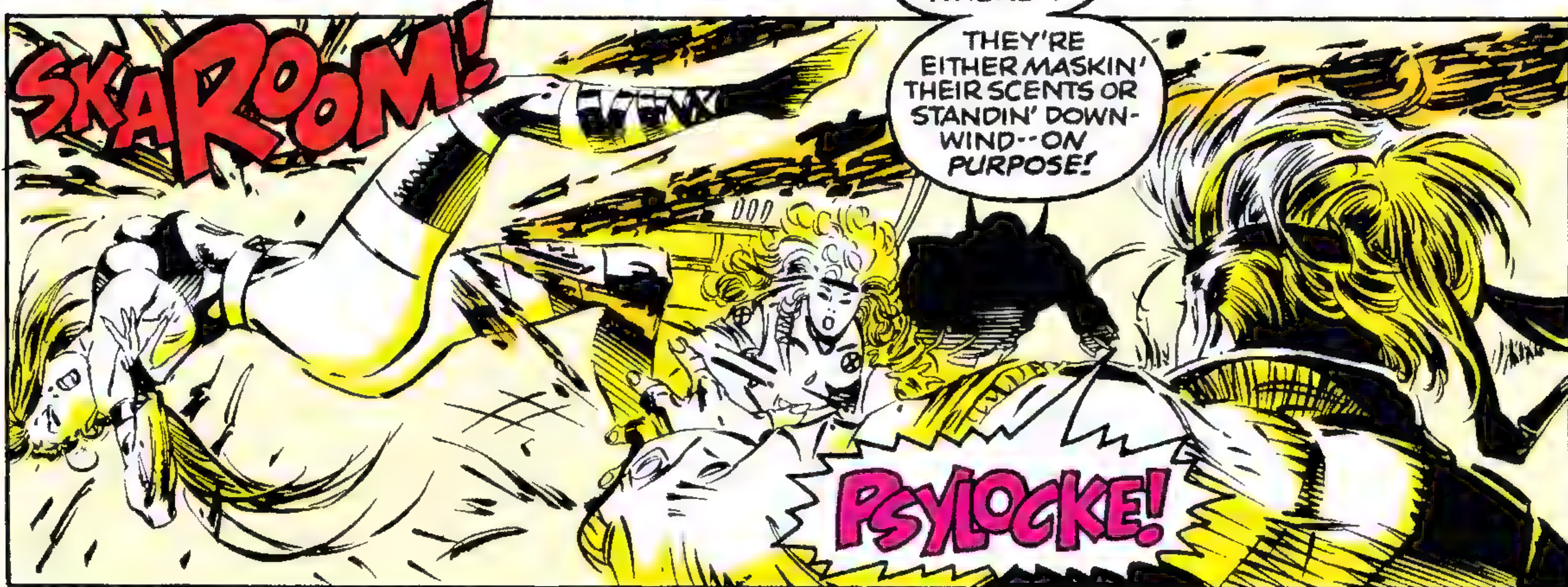
LET ME CHARGE UP, JUST IN CASE.



SCANNER'S PICKIN' UP MOVEMENT, BUT IT'S GARBLED!

THEY'RE ALL AROUND US--

--BUT I CAN'T TELL WHERE--!



SKAROOM!

THEY'RE EITHER MASKIN' THEIR SCENTS OR STANDIN' DOWN--WIND--ON PURPOSE!

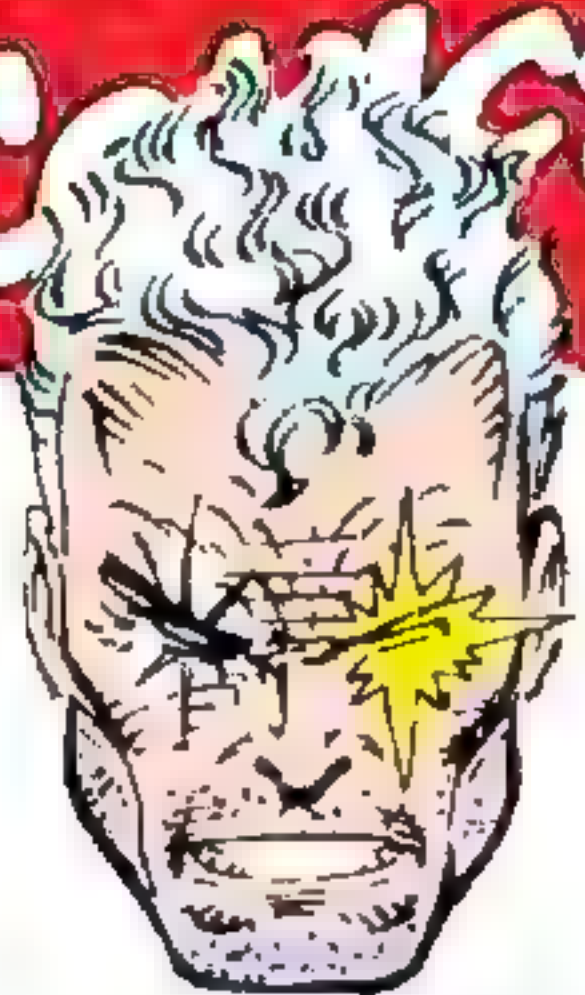
PSYLOCKE!



X vs. X!!
BISHOP vs. SINISTER!
CYCLOPS AND JEAN
DISCOVER A
STARTLING SECRET!

X-CUTIONER'S SONG
CONTINUES IN **X-FORCE #16!!**

MARVEL
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X-CUTIONER'S SONG™

PART 4

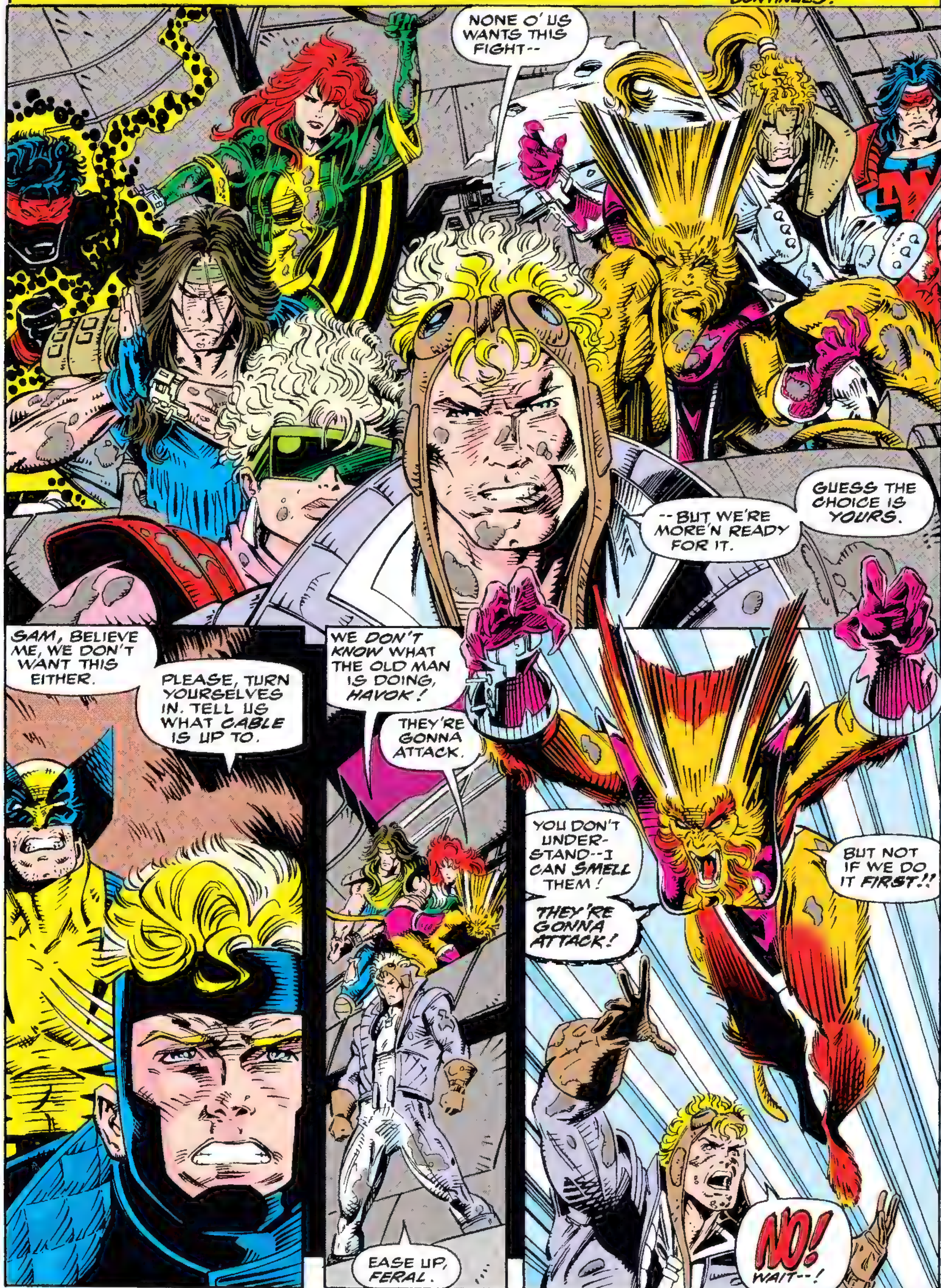


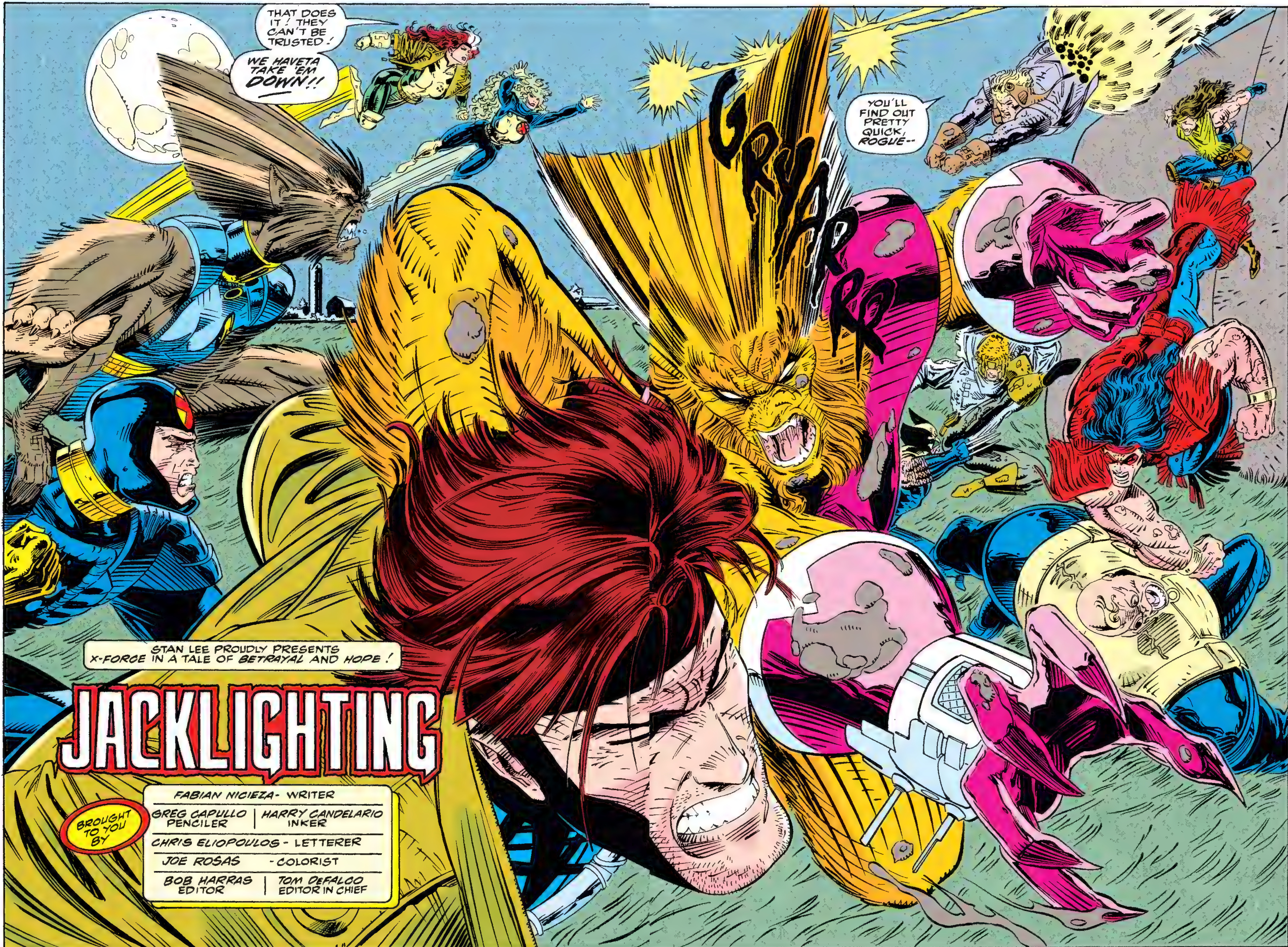
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CYCLOPS AND JEAN GREY--IN THE HANDS OF THE MLF! APOCALYPSE--REAWAKENED FROM A HEALING SLEEP! THE COMBINED X-MEN AND X-FACTOR TEAMS--PREPARED TO DO BATTLE WITH THE RENEGADE X-FORCE UNIT!

THE
CUTIONER'S SONG
CONTINUES!





THAT DOES
IT! THEY
CAN'T BE
TRUSTED!

WE HAVETA
TAKE 'EM
DOWN!!

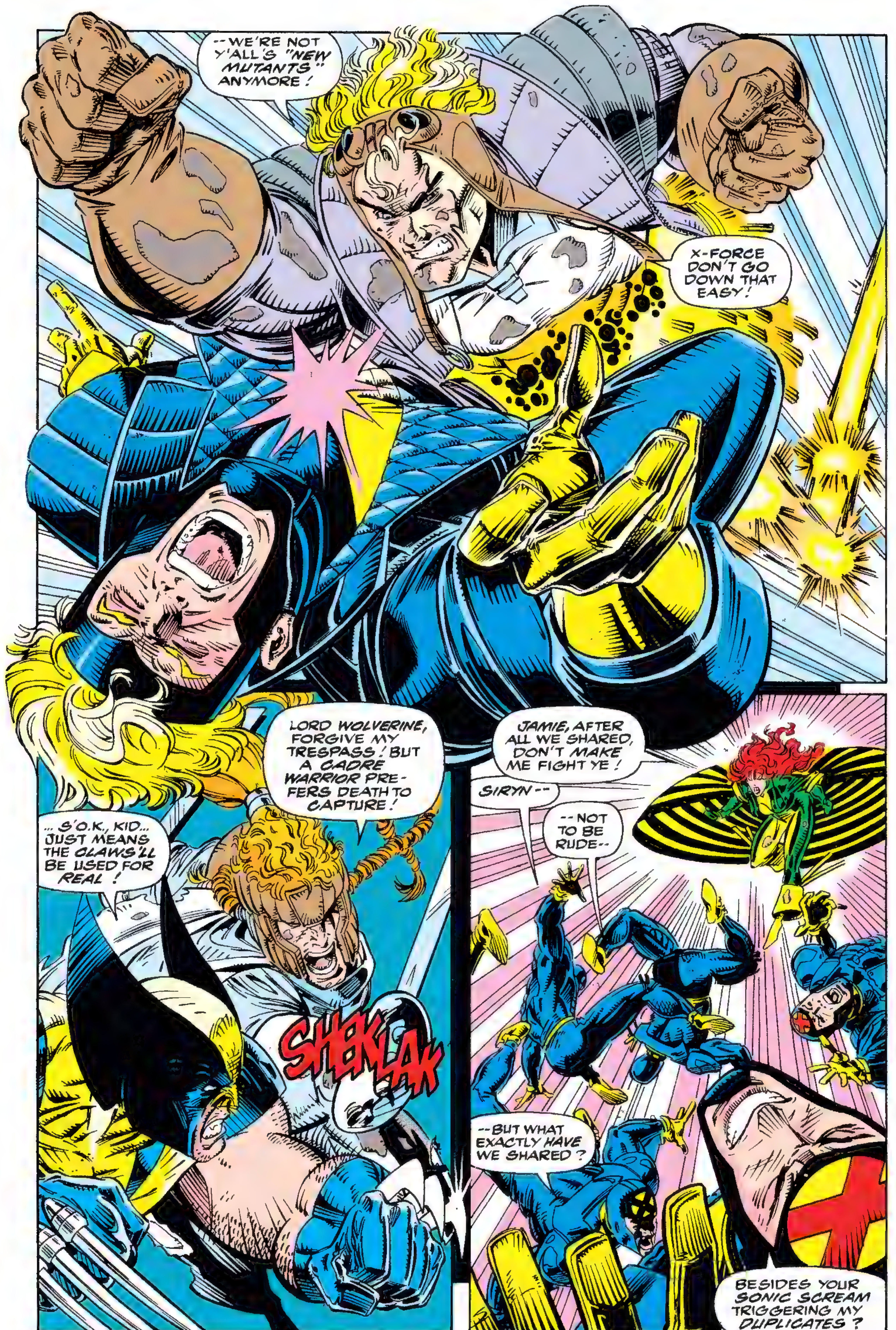
YOU'LL
FIND OUT
PRETTY
QUICK,
ROGUE--

STAN LEE PROUDLY PRESENTS
X-FORCE IN A TALE OF BETRAYAL AND HOPE!

JACKLIGHTING

BROUGHT
TO YOU
BY

FABIAN NICIEZA - WRITER	
GREG CAPULLO PENCILER	HARRY CANDELARIO INKER
CHRIS ELIOPOULOS - LETTERER	
JOE ROSAS - COLORIST	
BOB HARRAS EDITOR	TOM DEFALCO EDITOR IN CHIEF



-- WE'RE NOT
Y'ALL'S "NEW
MUTANTS"
ANYMORE!

X-FORCE
DON'T GO
DOWN THAT
EASY!

LORD WOLVERINE,
FORGIVE MY
TRESPASS! BUT
A CADRE
WARRIOR PRE-
FERS DEATH TO
CAPTURE!

JAMIE, AFTER
ALL WE SHARED,
DON'T MAKE
ME FIGHT YE!

SIRYN --

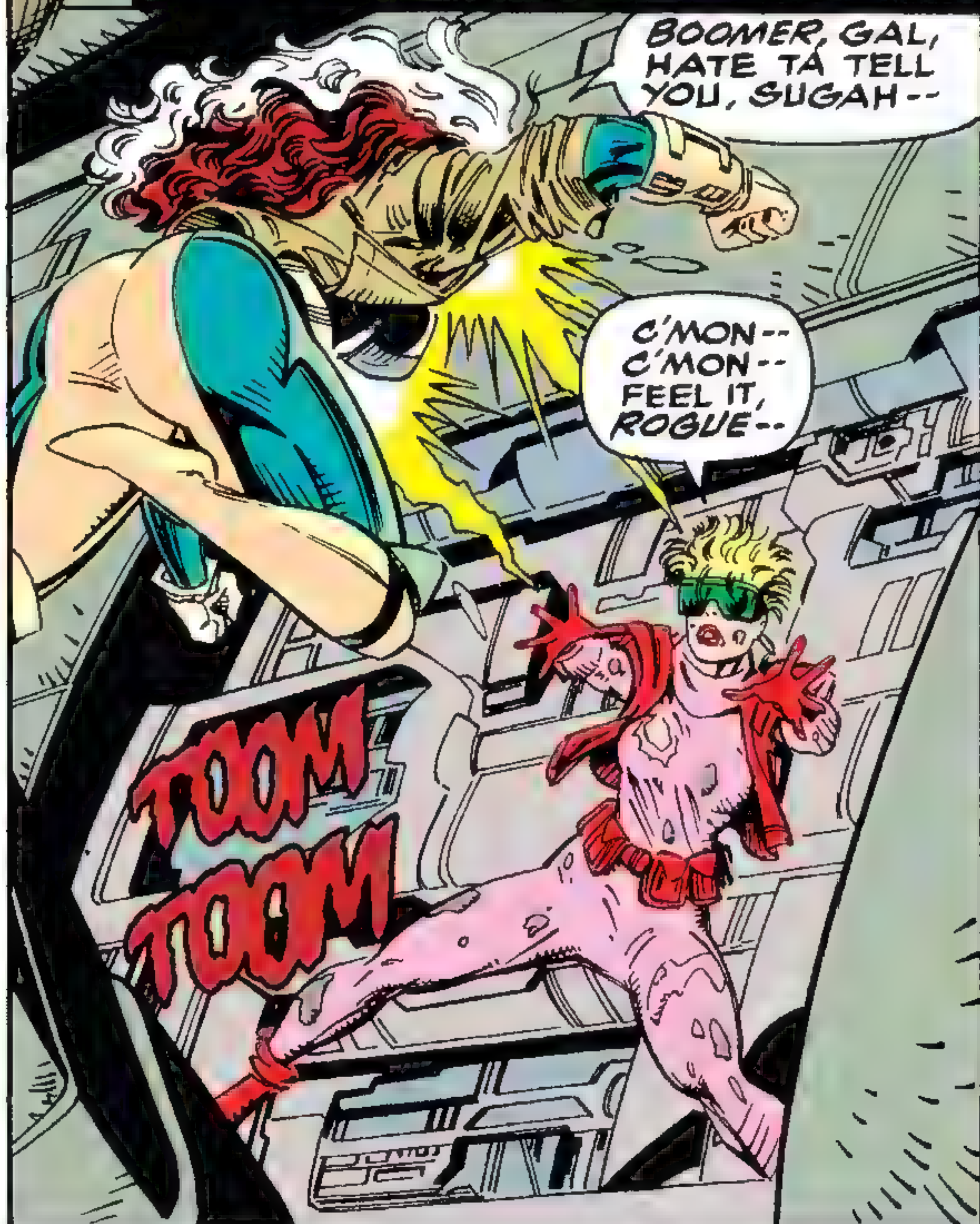
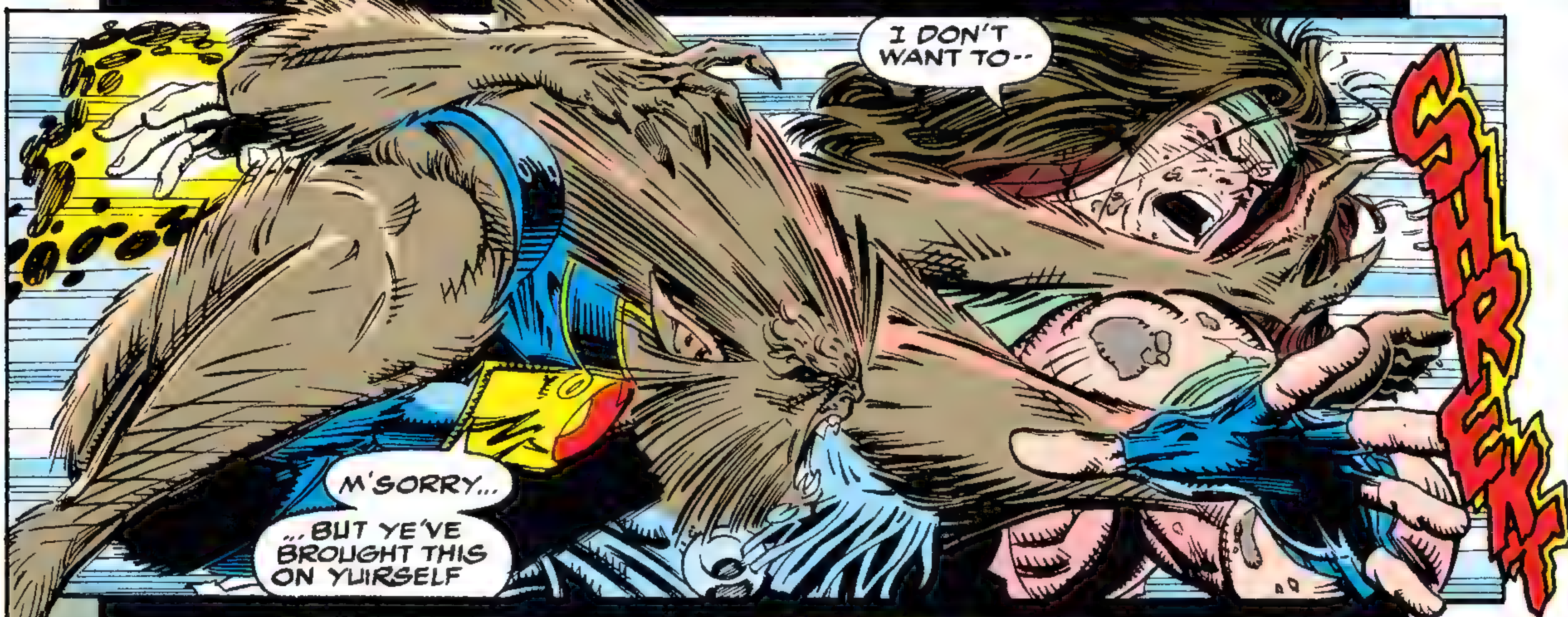
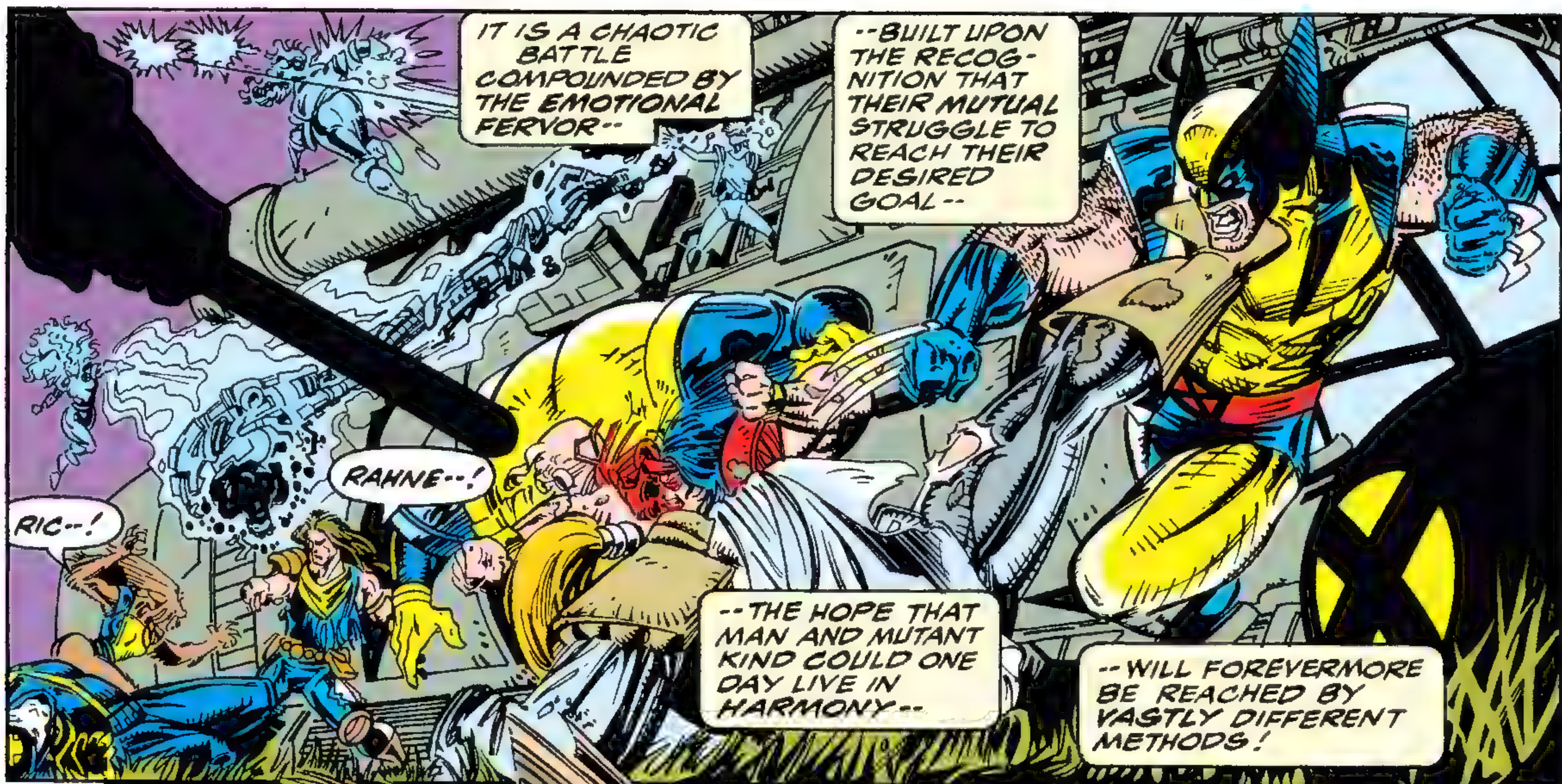
-- NOT
TO BE
RUDE--

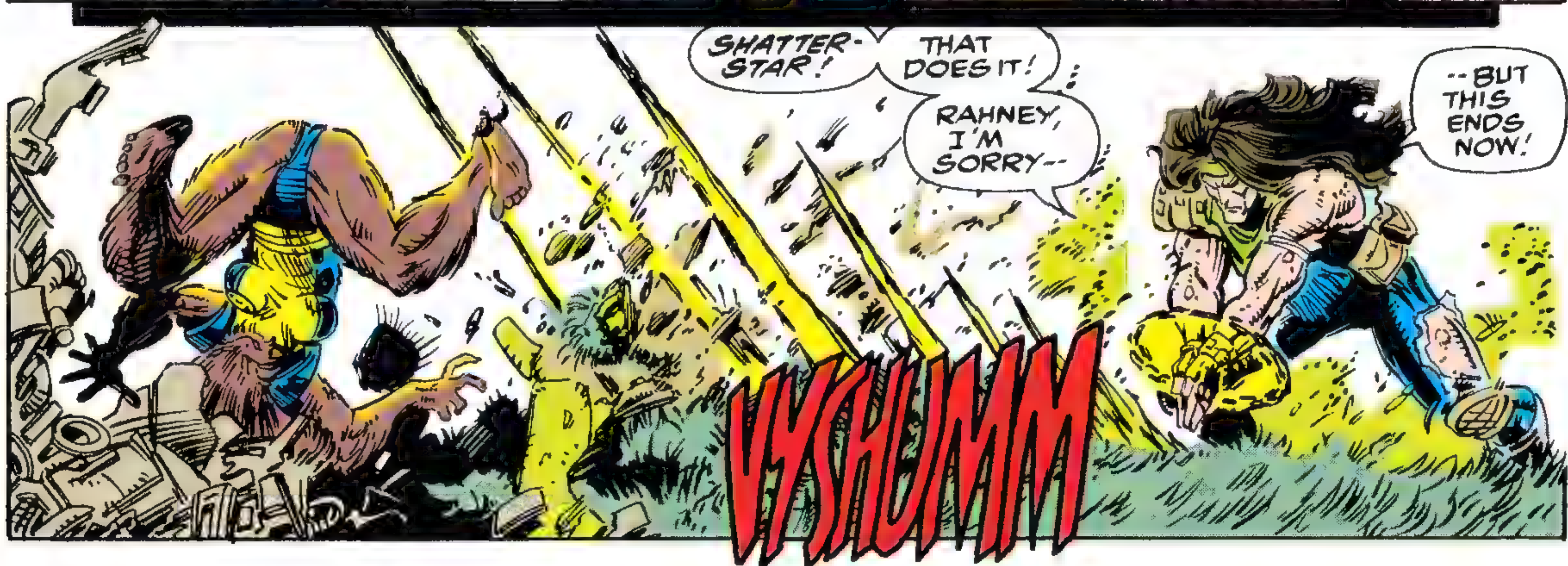
-- BUT WHAT
EXACTLY HAVE
WE SHARED?

BESIDES YOUR
SONIC SCREAM
TRIGGERING MY
DUPLICATES?

... S.O.K, KID...
JUST MEANS
THE CLAWS'LL
BE USED FOR
REAL!

SHOK LAK





X-FORCE--
REGROUP!

WE'RE
OUTTA
HERE!

NO--

--NOT
ALL OF
YOU--

HAVOK'S
PLASMA
BURST
NAILED
RIC!

WOLVERINE-- WHERE
ARE YOU GOING?

YOU CLEAN
HOUSE HERE,
SUMMERS--
TEND T'THE
WOUNDED.

WHY'RE
WE RUNNING
AWAY?! 'RE
YOU QUITTING
ON US,
GUTHRIE?

WE'RE
NOT
QUITTING,
FERAL!

AT THE RATE
WE WERE GOIN',
WE WOULDN'TA
LASTED ANOTHER
TWO MINUTES!

AT LEAST
THIS GIVES
US A CHANCE
TO CATCH OUR
BREATH AN'
FIGURE OUT
WHAT TO DO!

THEY'RE
HIDIN'
SOMEWHERE
IN THE WOODS
'ROUND THIS
CREEK--

-- THAT'S A
HUNTING
GROUND OUT
THERE...

...AND I'M
THE HUNTER!

MEANWHILE, AT A
WAREHOUSE
COMPLEX OFF
THE CHESA-
PEAKE BAY--

-- THE X-MEN'S BLACKBIRD
CRAFT SILENTLY TOUCHES
DOWN--

-- AND A DETERMINED
FIGHTING UNIT PREPARES
TO SEARCH FOR THEIR
MISSING FRIENDS.

ARCHANGEL, QUICKSILVER,
STORM, ICEMAN, COLOSSUS
AND THE BEAST-- CHILDREN
OF THE ATOM, RIDERS ON THE
WAVE OF GENETIC FIRE--

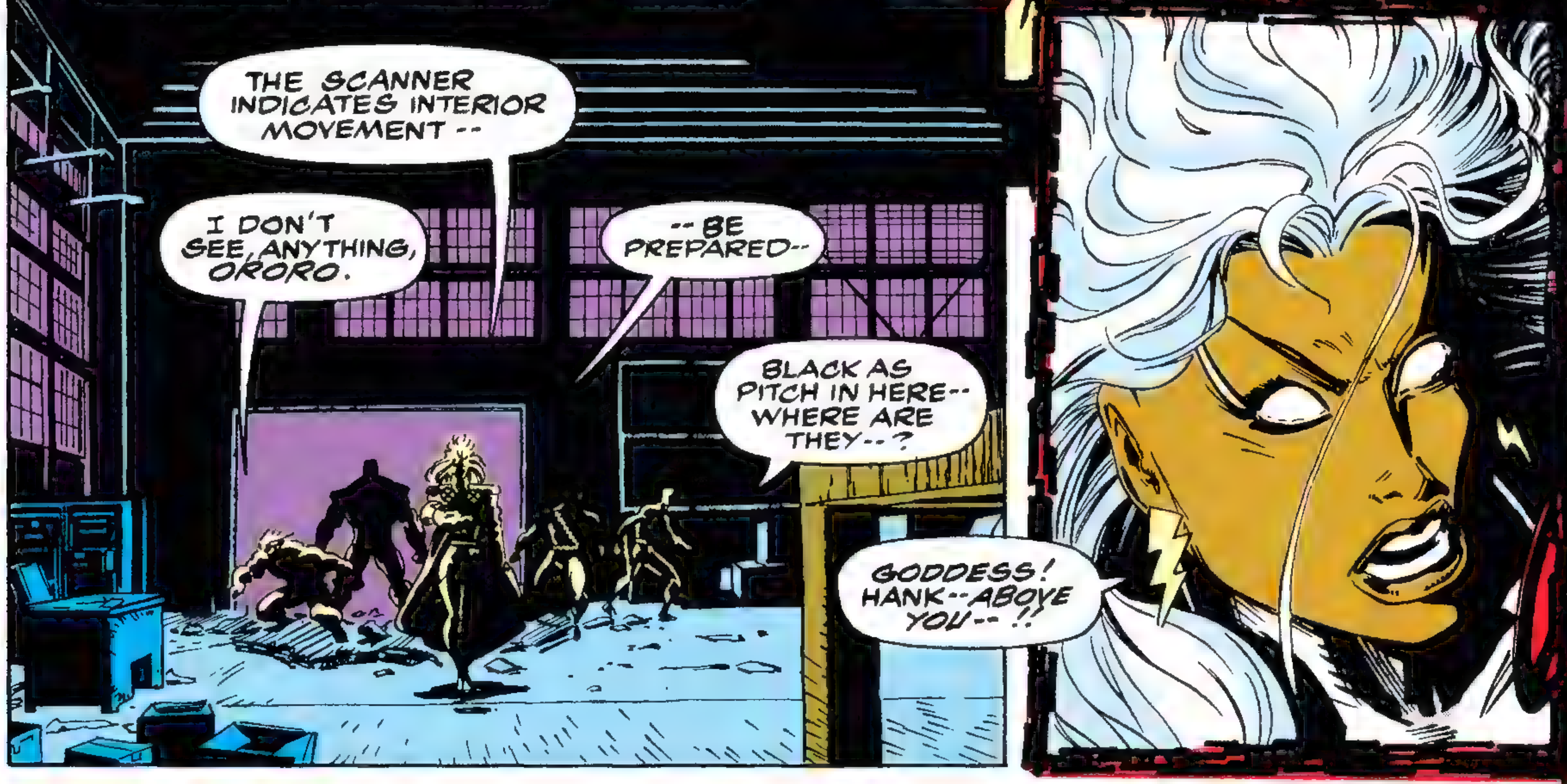
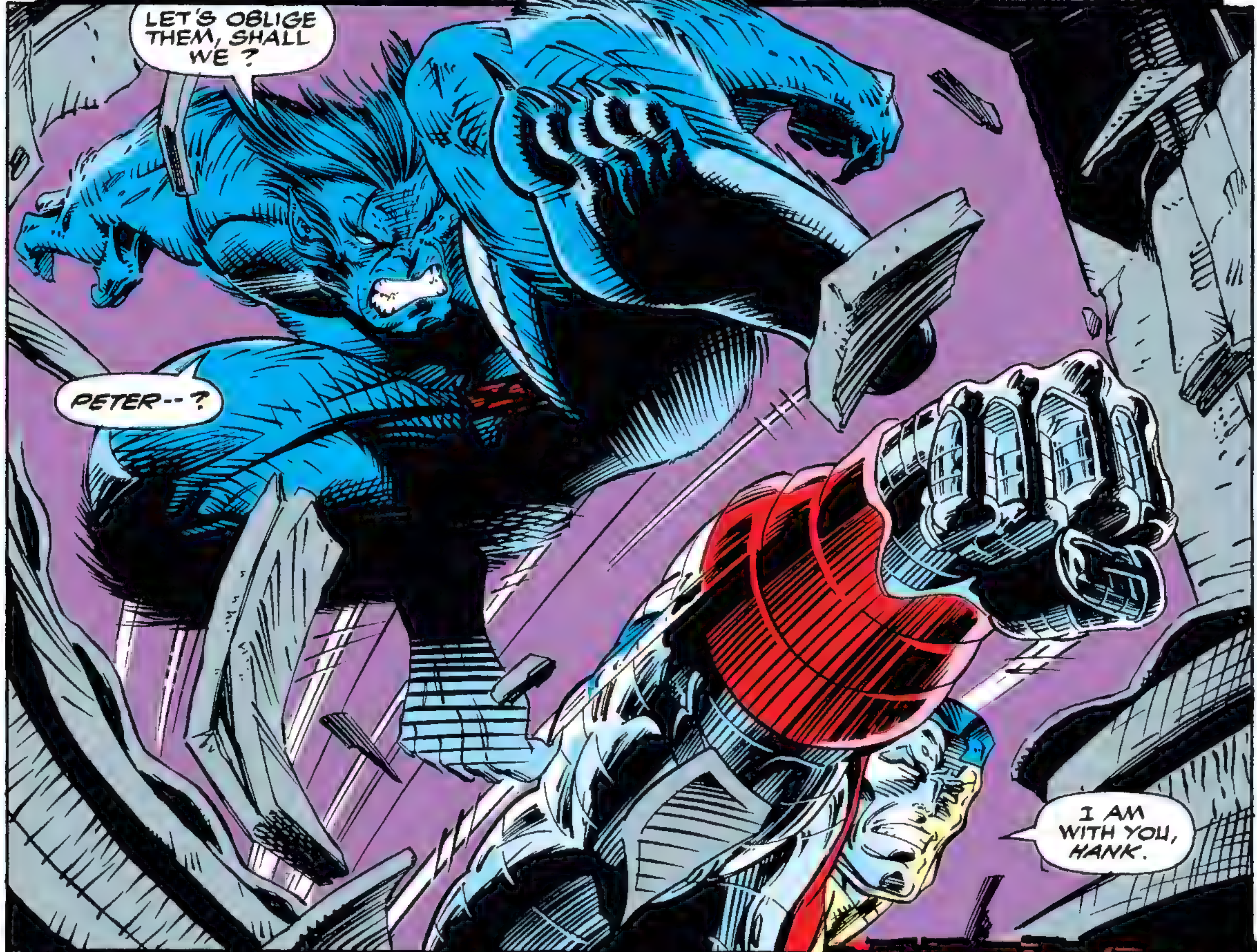
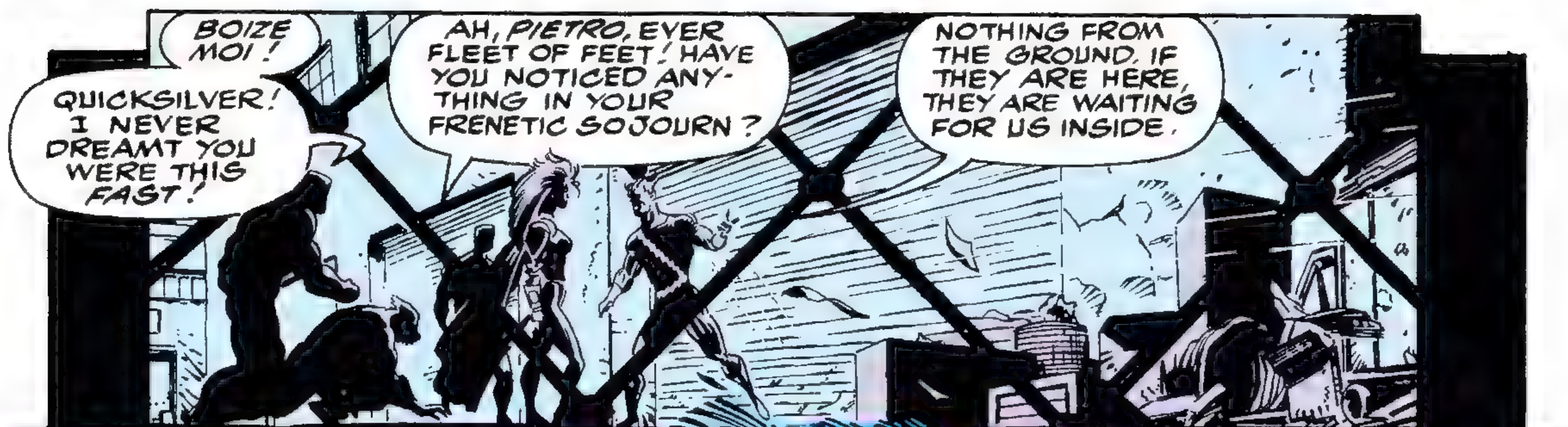
-- STEELING THEMSELVES
FOR A FIGHT AGAINST A
MADMAN WHO BELIEVES
ONLY THE FIT SHOULD
SURVIVE-- AND ONLY HE
CAN DETERMINE WHO THE
SURVIVORS SHALL BE !

NOT THE KIND
OF PLACE I'D
EXPECT TO FIND
APOCALYPSE.

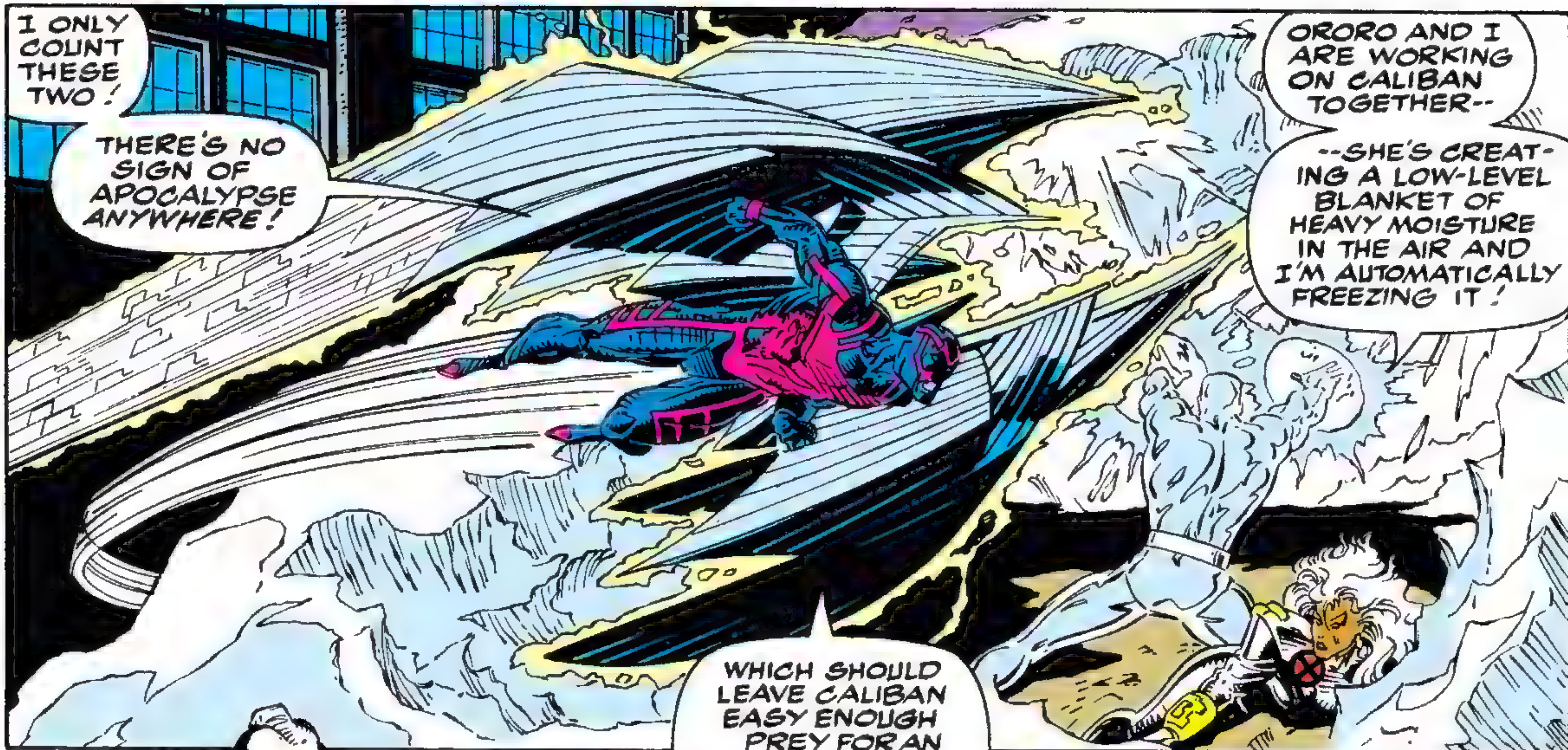
WE DO BE-
COME JADED
BY THE TRAP-
PINGS OF
VILLAINOUS
EXCESS, DON'T
WE ?

THE CEREBRO
SCANNER IS
READING CALI-
BAN'S MUTAGENIC
SIGNATURE.

ARCHANGEL, QUICKSILVER, PERFORM
AN AERIAL AND ALL-TERRAIN
RECONNAISSANCE OF THE WARE-
HOUSE.







I ONLY COUNT THESE TWO!

THERE'S NO SIGN OF APOCALYPSE ANYWHERE!

ORORO AND I ARE WORKING ON CALIBAN TOGETHER--

--SHE'S CREATING A LOW-LEVEL BLANKET OF HEAVY MOISTURE IN THE AIR AND I'M AUTOMATICALLY FREEZING IT!

WHICH SHOULD LEAVE CALIBAN EASY ENOUGH PREY FOR AN ASSAULT OF NEURO-DARTS FROM MY WINGS!



AND HERE IS A LITTLE FOOD FOR THOUGHT FOR THE EMACIATED CRONE--



--MY METABOLISM IS SO FAST, HER TOUCH CAN BARELY AFFECT ME...



PHW... BUT JUST ENOUGH TO WIND ME.

HANK-- HOW ARE YOU?

HUNGRY.

THERE'S SOMETHING HERE-- INSIDE THE ICE-MOUND--

SHAK

PHIST

IF THIS IS BEING SEEN,
THEN I ASSUME THE
HORSEMEN HAVE BEEN
DEFEATED--

--AND THE
X-MEN HAVE
ADVANCED
TO THE NEXT
LEVEL OF THE
GAME.

IT'S AN
ELECTRONIC
DEVICE
OF SOME
KIND--

TIK

A HOLOGRAPHIC
PROJECTION OF
MR. SINISTER?

WHAT'S HE
GOT TO DO
WITH THIS?

DO NOT BE OVERLY
UPSET BY MY MACHI-
NATIONS, CHILDREN OF
XAVIER, BUT IT WAS I
WHO ABDUCTED YOUR
FRIENDS, AND NOW MY
PART IN THIS MAD
GAME CONCLUDES...

...BUT DO NOT
ALLOW MY
PARTICIPATION
TO DETER YOU
FROM YOUR
ORIGINAL GOAL--

--FOR APOCALYPSE--
UNBEKNOWNST
EVEN TO HIM-- IS
STILL THE CAUSE
OF THIS MADNESS--

--AND THEREFORE,
A MEANS TO AN
END!

PHIST

WE'RE BEING
PLAYED FOR
FOOLS--

--AND WE'RE
STILL NO CLOSER
TO FINDING
APOCALYPSE--

--NO CLOSER
TO SLICING
HIM TO
RIBBONS!

XAVIER'S MANSION,
WESTCHESTER, NEW
YORK...

**BRYEEP
BRYEEP**

RELEASE
THEM NOW,
SINISTER!

YOU ASK ME
IF I AM
PREPARED
TO DIE FOR
CHARLES
XAVIER...

... THAT
ANSWER IS
OBVIOUS!

THE REAL
QUESTION IS
NOT WHETHER
I AM PRE-
PARED--

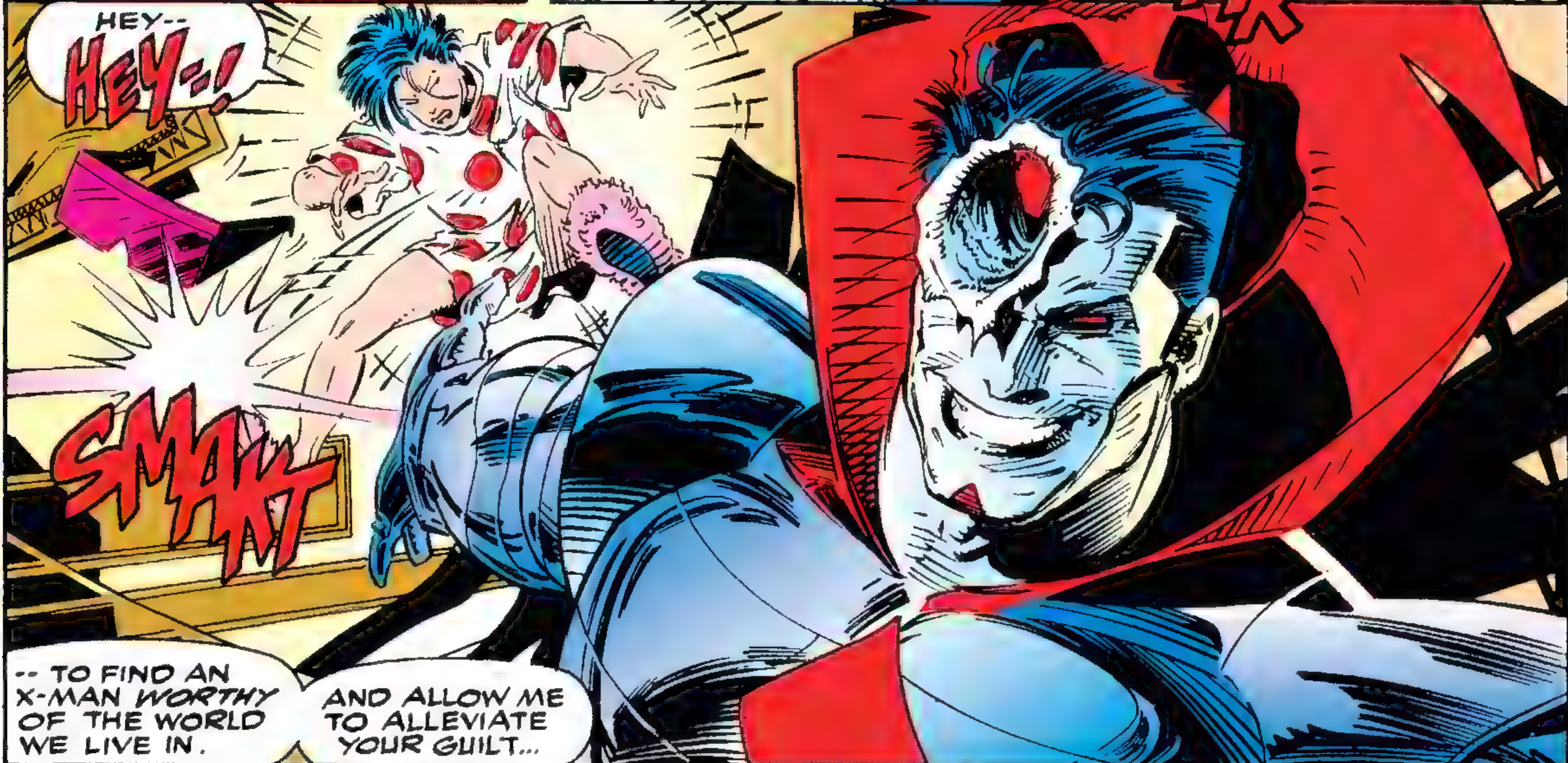
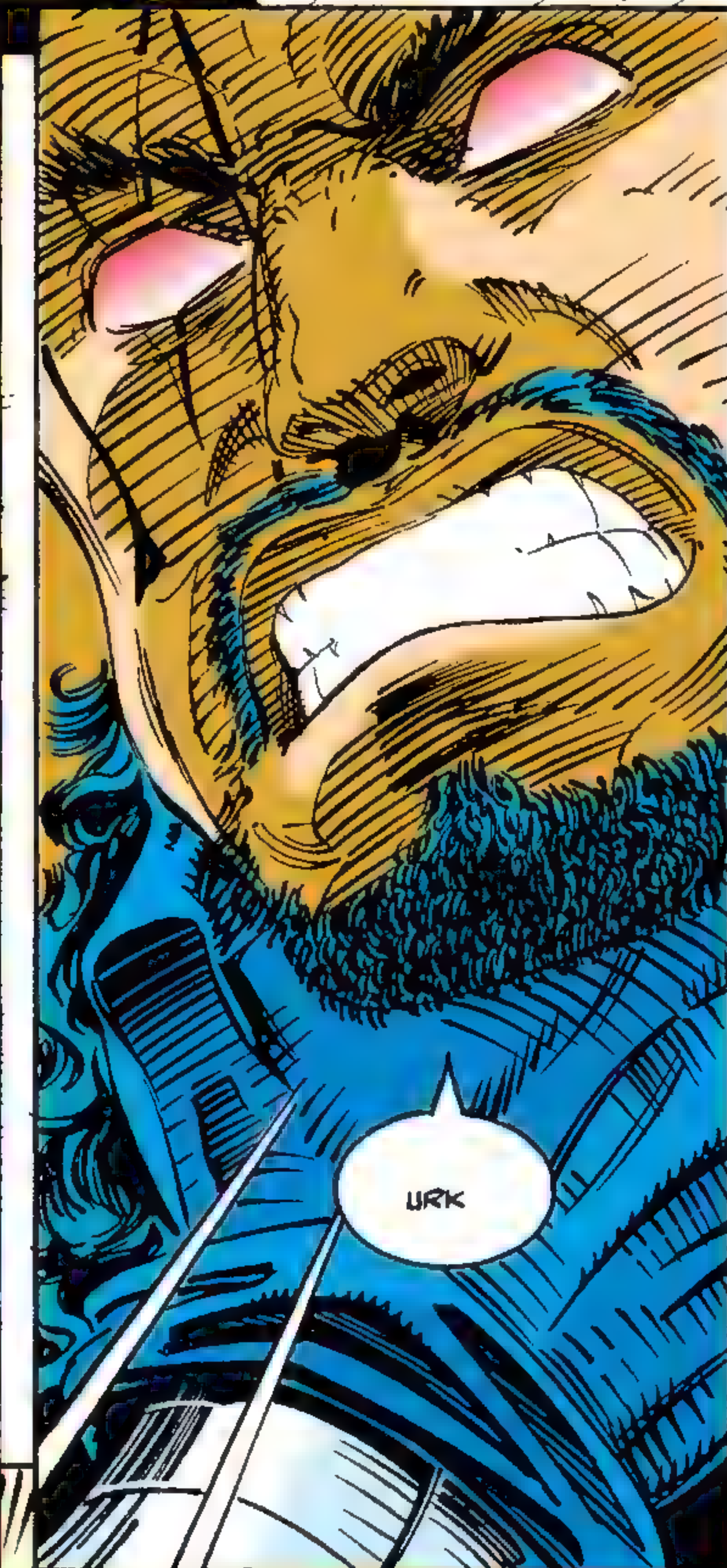
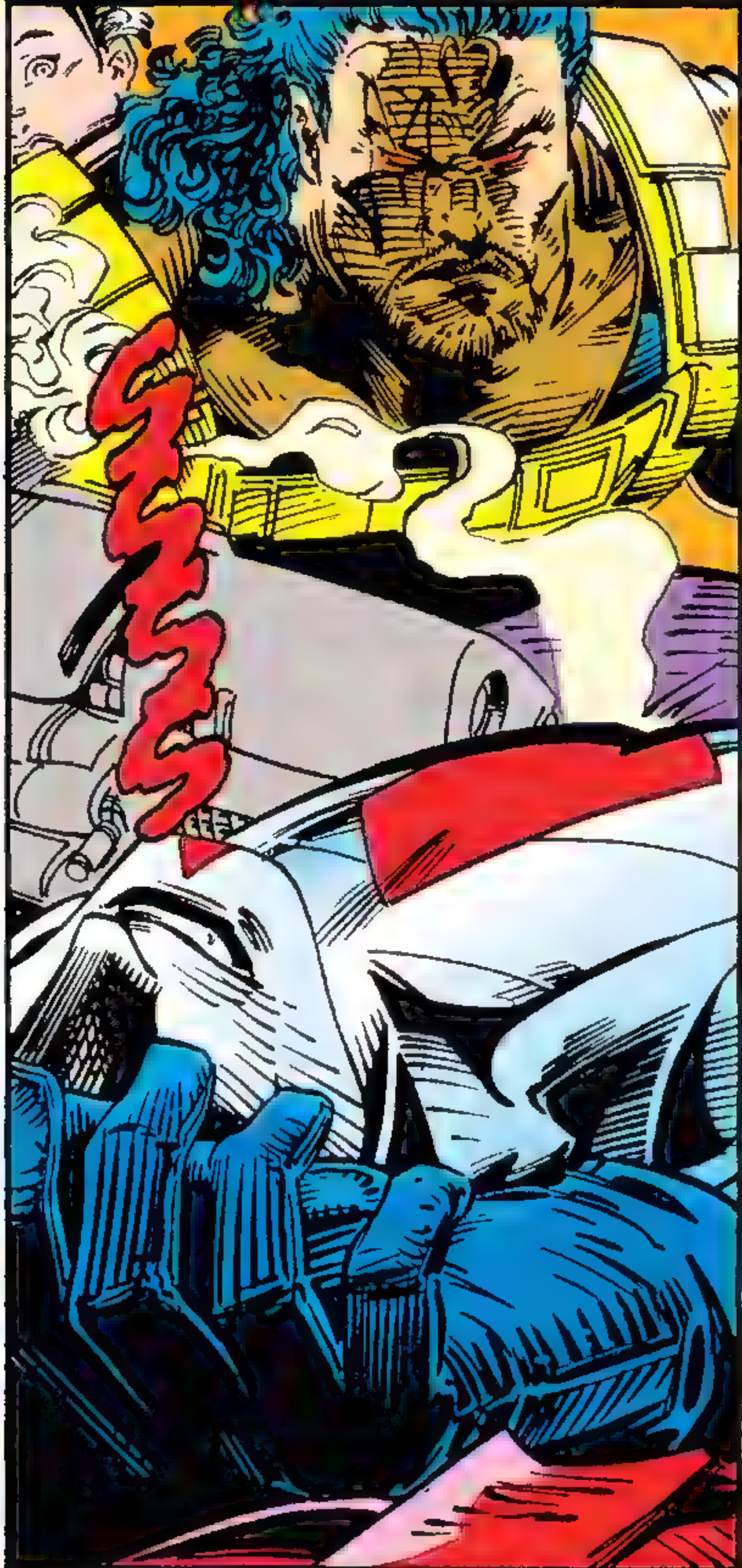
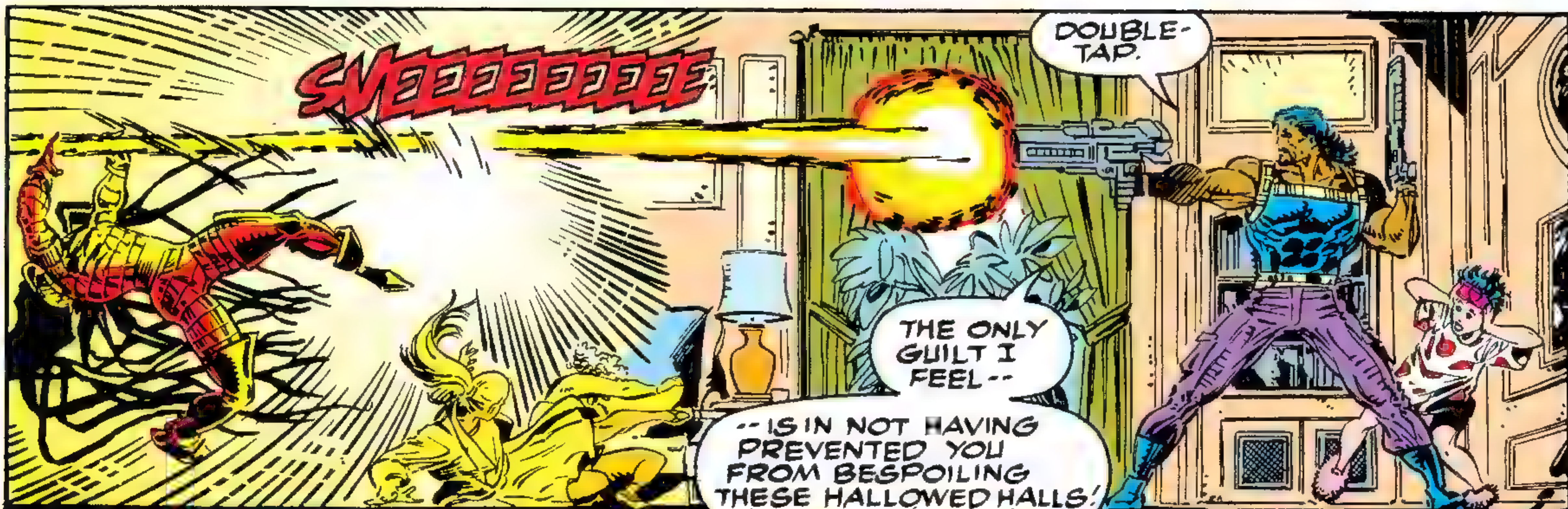
-- BUT ARE
YOU+?!

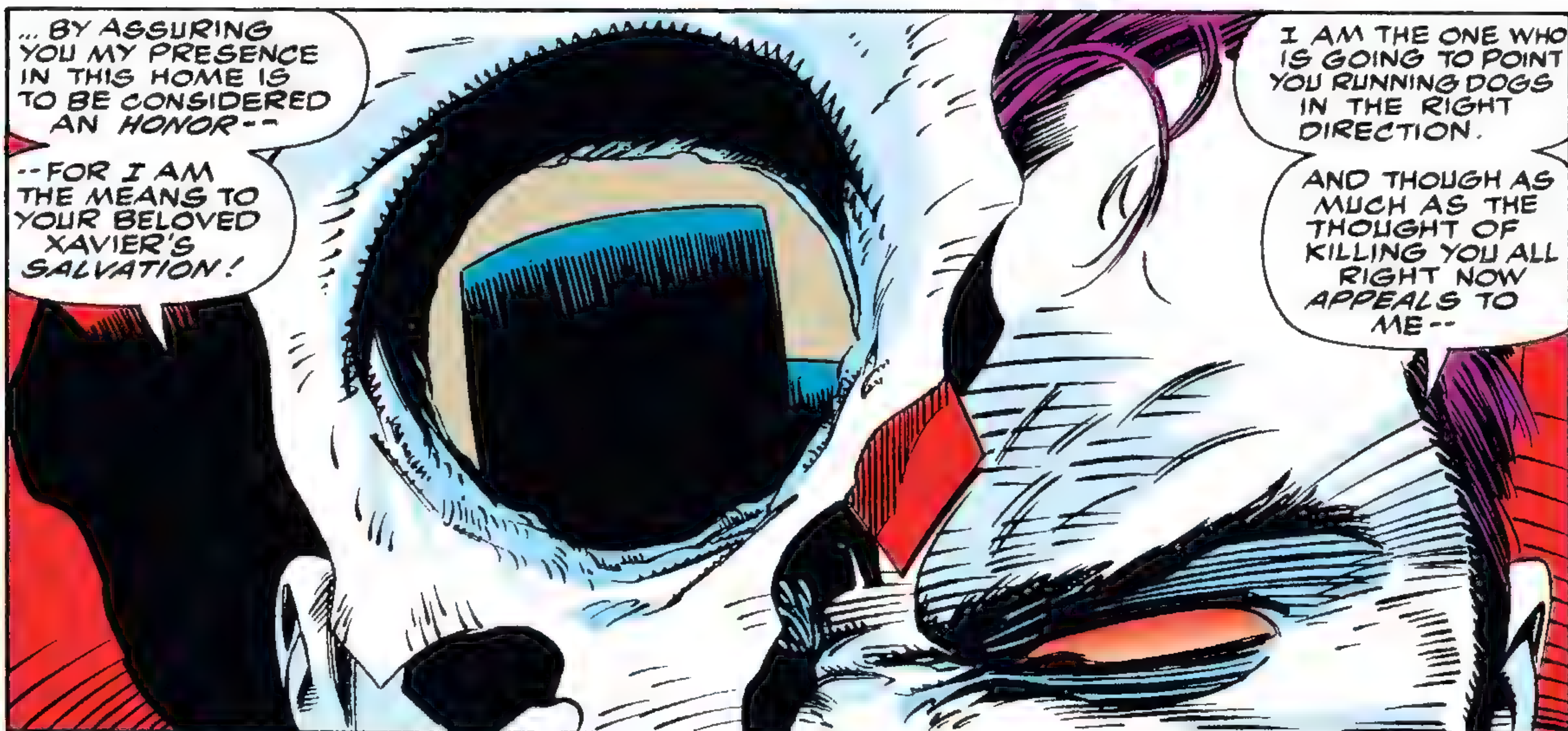
YIPE

WOULD THAT
THE CHILDREN
OF XAVIER HAD
THE COURAGE TO
SETTLE THEIR
PROBLEMS SO
CLEANLY.

I --
AMONG
MANY--

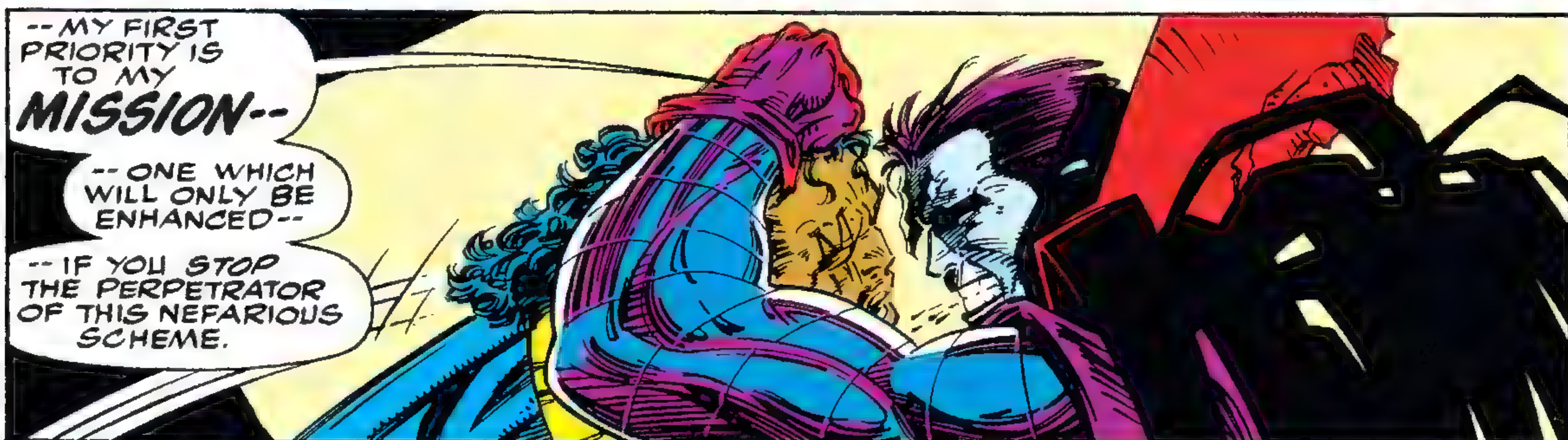
-- KNOW
THAT YOU
DO NOT!





... BY ASSURING
YOU MY PRESENCE
IN THIS HOME IS
TO BE CONSIDERED
AN HONOR--
--FOR I AM
THE MEANS TO
YOUR BELOVED
XAVIER'S
SALVATION!

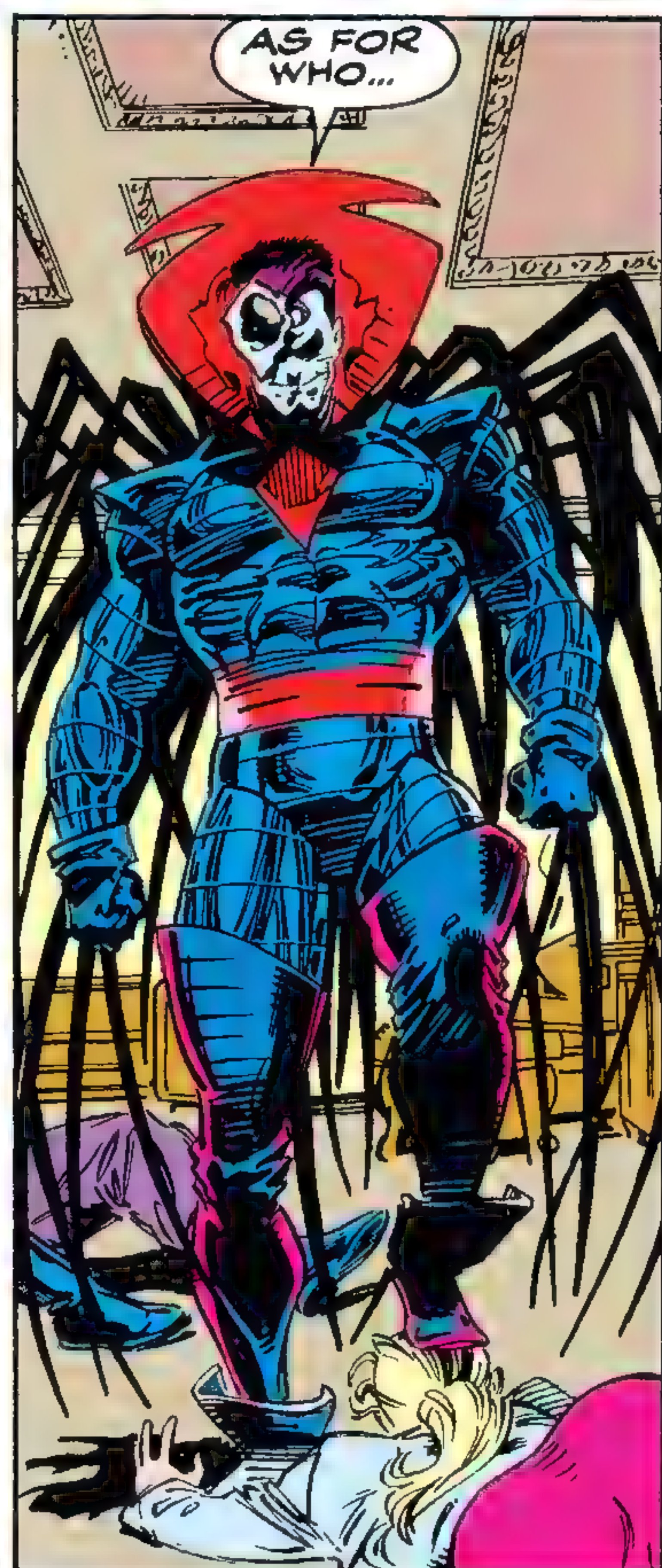
I AM THE ONE WHO
IS GOING TO POINT
YOU RUNNING DOGS
IN THE RIGHT
DIRECTION.
AND THOUGH AS
MUCH AS THE
THOUGHT OF
KILLING YOU ALL
RIGHT NOW
APPEALS TO
ME--



-- MY FIRST
PRIORITY IS
TO MY
MISSION--
-- ONE WHICH
WILL ONLY BE
ENHANCED--
-- IF YOU STOP
THE PERPETRATOR
OF THIS NEFARIOUS
SCHEME.



TELL--
US--WHO--
WHERE--
WHERE, I
TRULY DO
NOT KNOW,
VALERIE.



AS FOR
WHO...



HIM??!

A MOUNTAIN CHALET SAFE-HOUSE, OUTSIDE OF DAVOS-DORF, SWITZERLAND...

PRO-FESSOR, STATUS REPORT.

There has been an escalation in maneuvers, Nathan.

Mr. Sinister has visited the mansion.

X-Force is engaged in West Texas.

Caliban and Famine have been defeated in Virginia.

--MAN TO MAN--

TOO MUCH HAPPENING TOO QUICKLY.

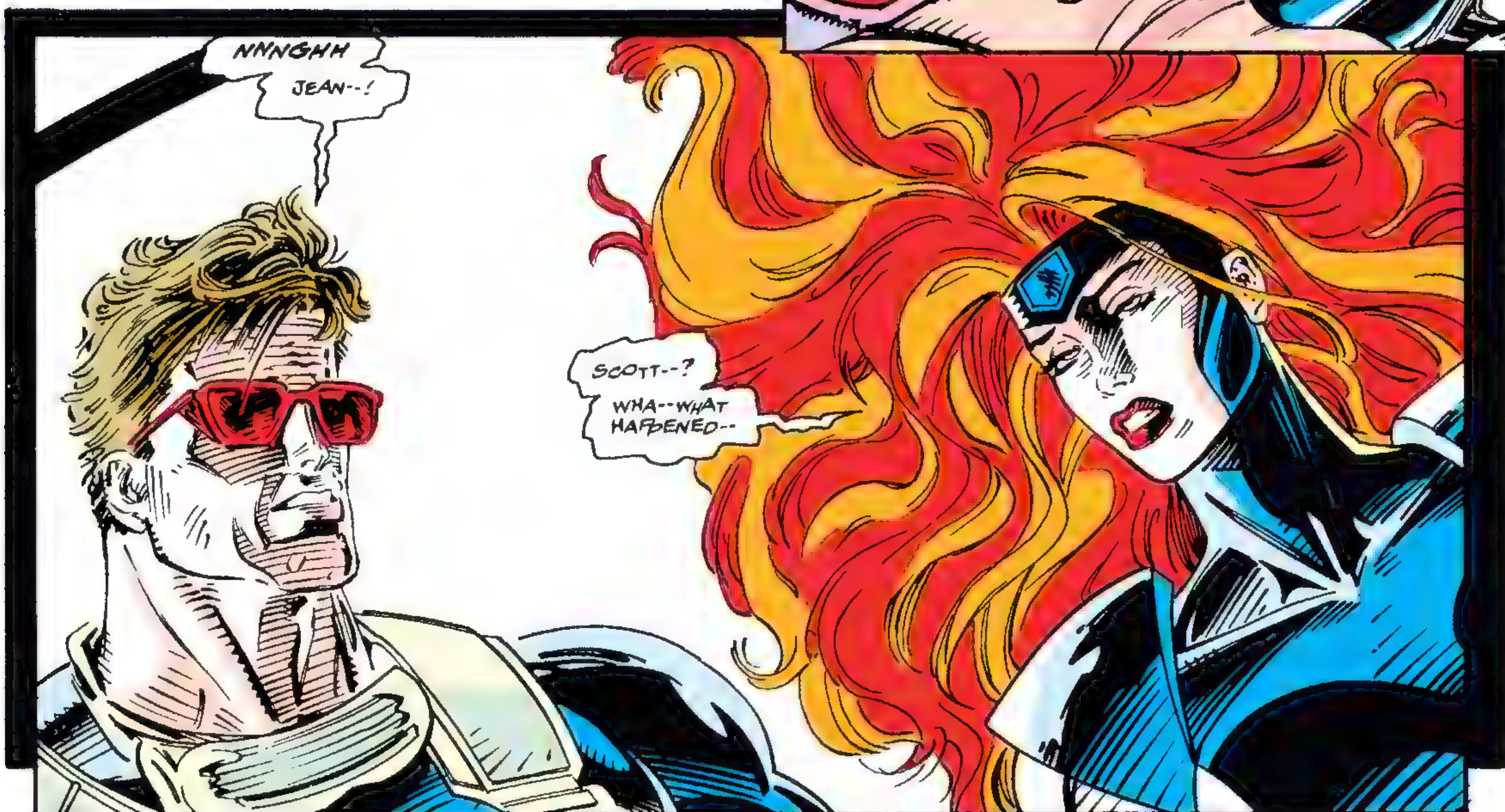
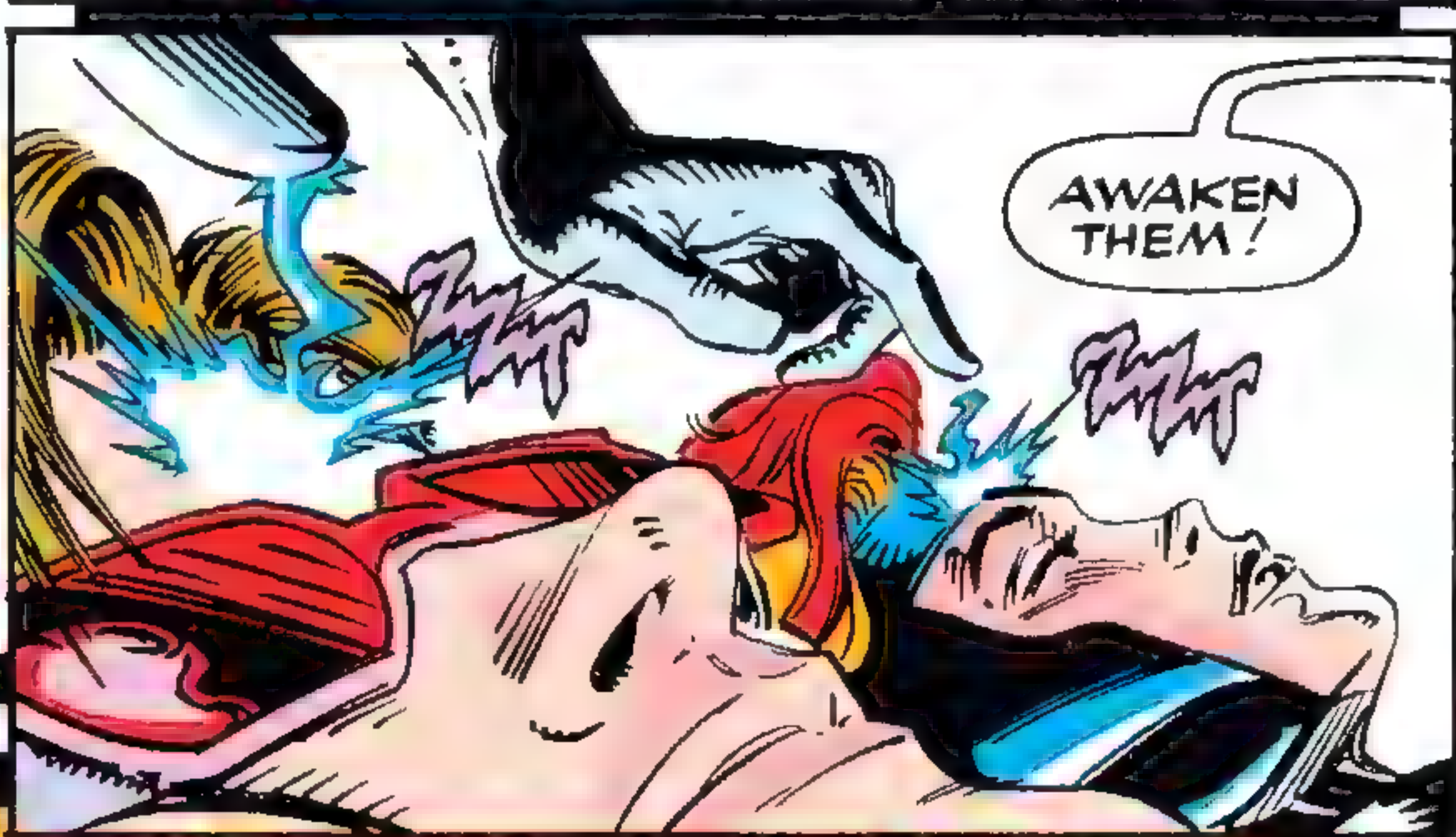
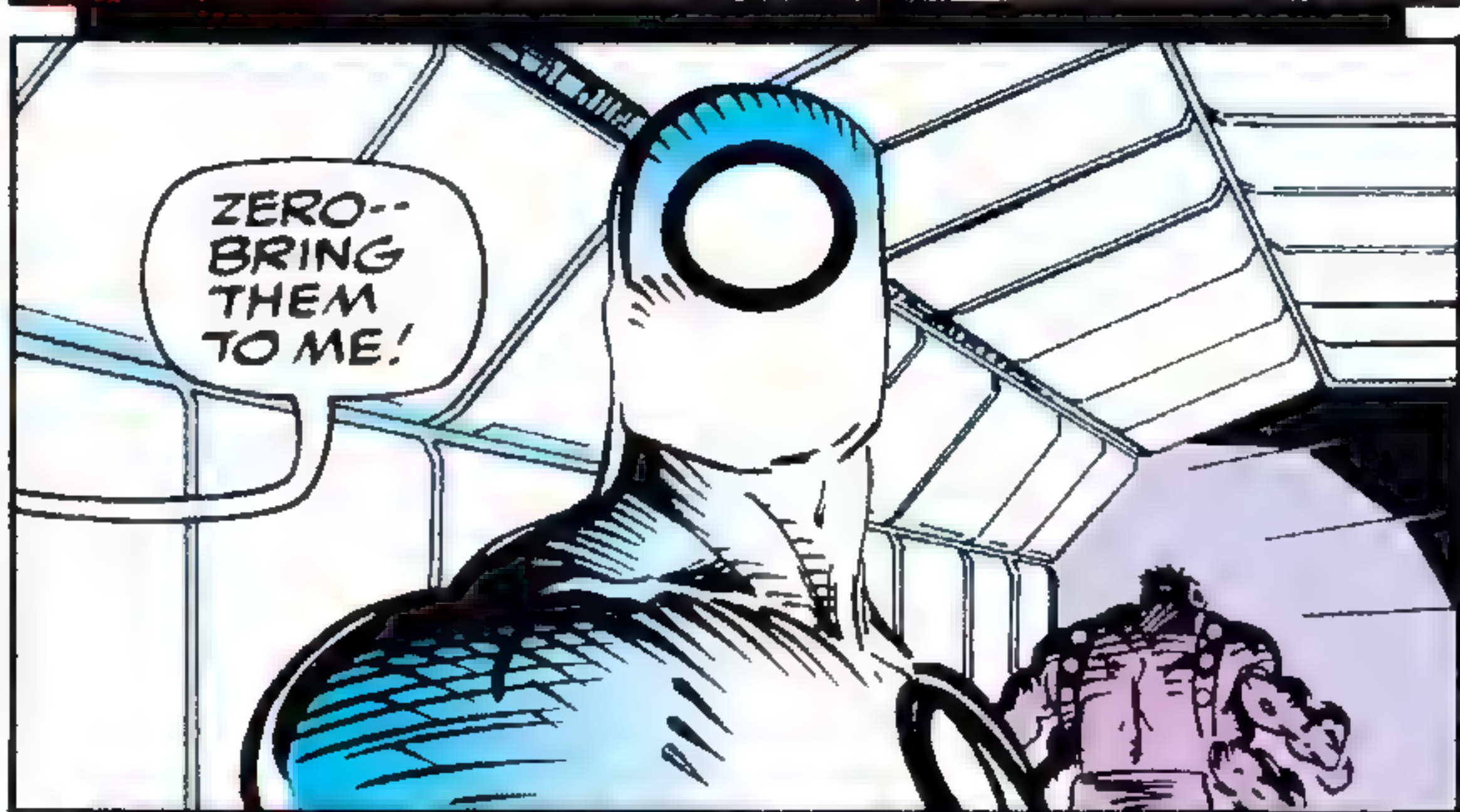
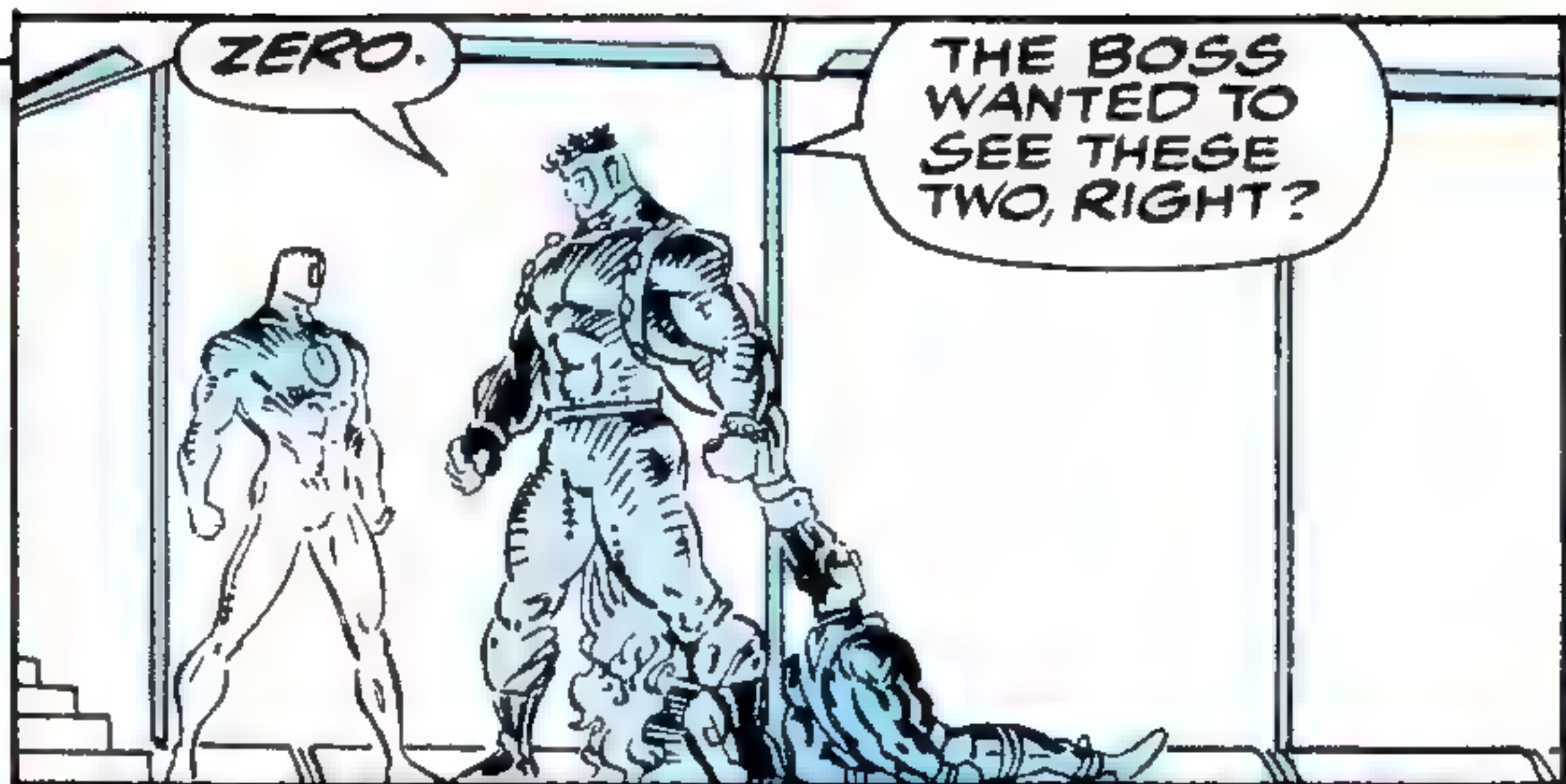
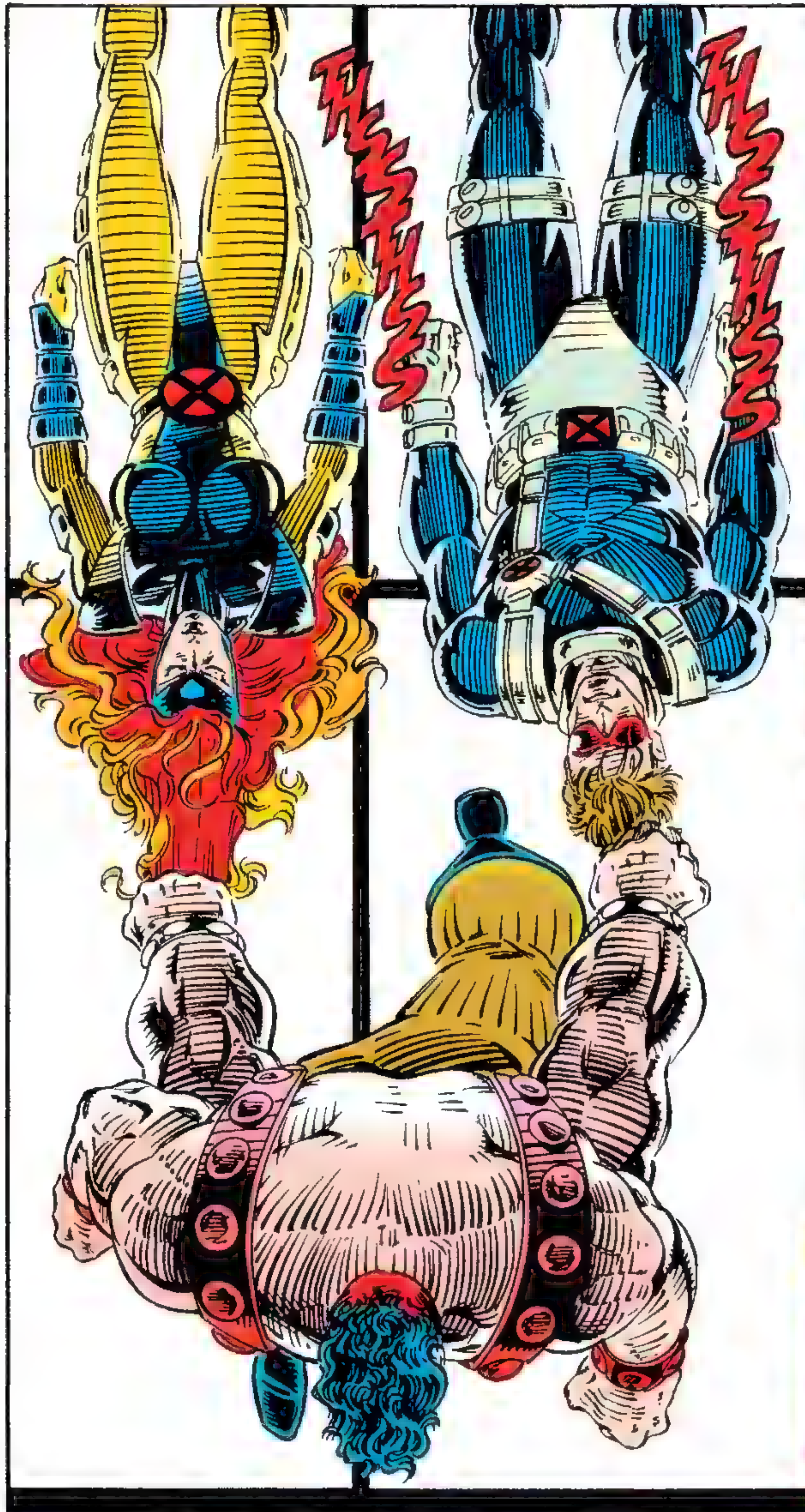
ONLY ONE PERSON CAN BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL OF IT.

IT'S TIME TO TAKE HIM DOWN ONCE AND FOR ALL--

--AND QUITE LITERALLY--

--FACE TO FACE!!

SOMEWHERE...



WHERE ARE WE--?!

HOW DID WE GET IN UNIFORM?

PLEASE, CALM YOURSELVES.

WHO--?!

ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF, X-MEN--

--I AM
STRYFE!

THE CROWN PRINCE OF MUTANTKIND.

AND YOU.

THE KING AND QUEEN OF WHAT IS TO COME.

"FATHER"--

--"MOTHER"--

--WELCOME TO THE
END OF TOMORROW!



A FARM FIELD IN TEXAS.
TIME FOR THE CROPS
TO COME DOWN...

KEEP
MOVIN'--

-- FERAL,
YOU PICKIN'
UP ANY
PURSUIT?

CAN'T
SMELL A
THING--

-- AND
WITH IRISH'S
RACKET--

--CAN'T HEAR
A THING EITHER!

YOU CAN BE
SURE THERE'S
ONE PERSON
THEY'VE SENT
AFTER US--



GOT
THAT RIGHT,
KID!



NNRYAGHH

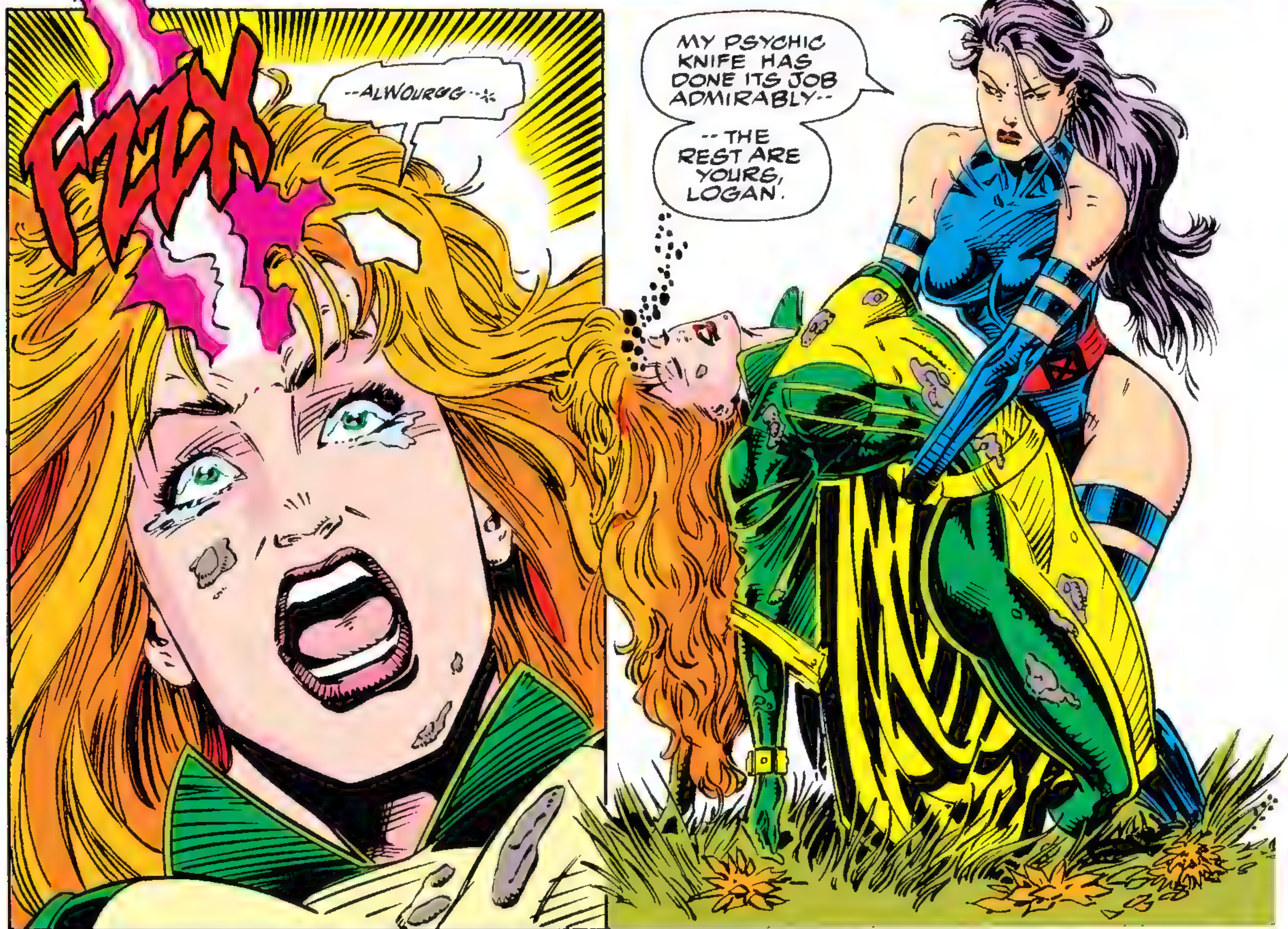
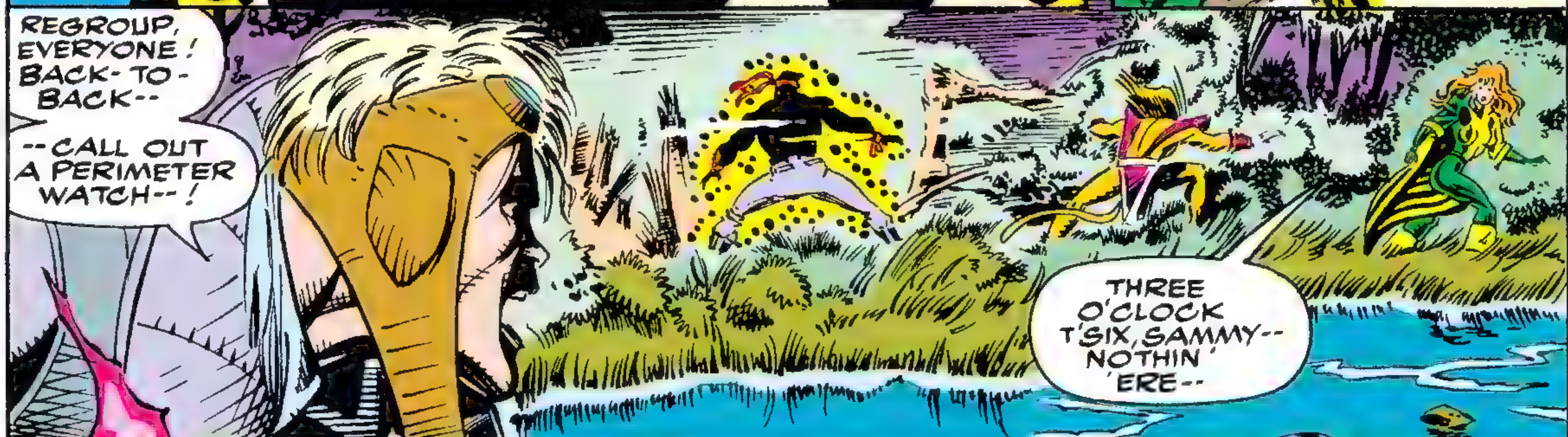
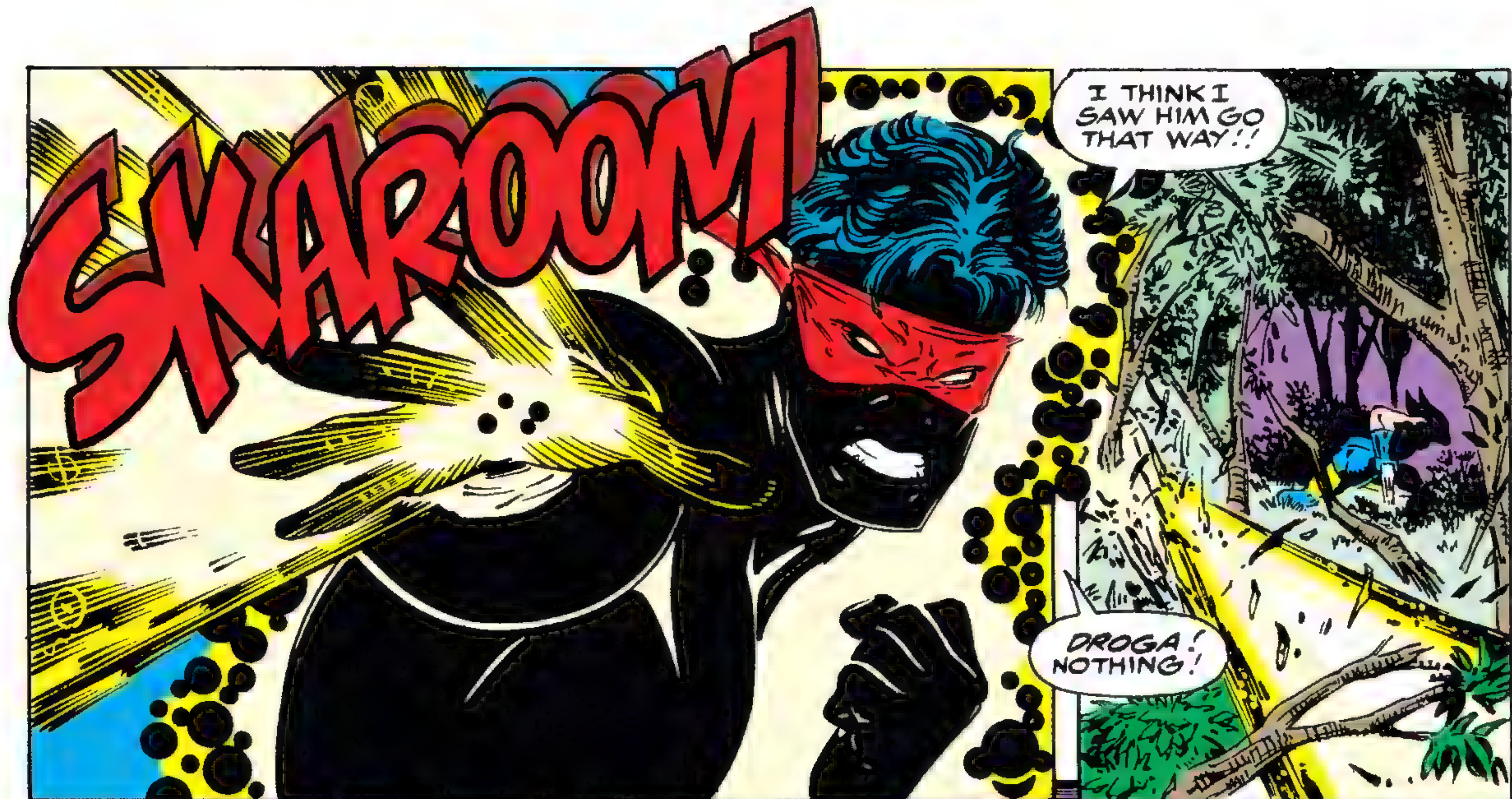
SPLUSH

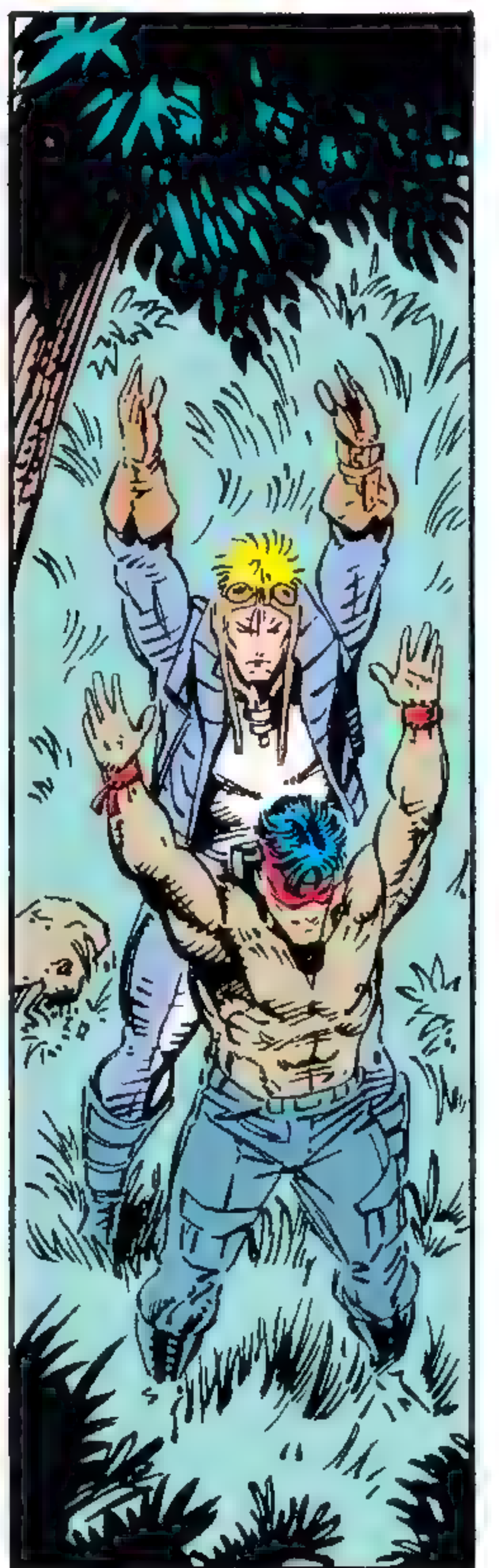


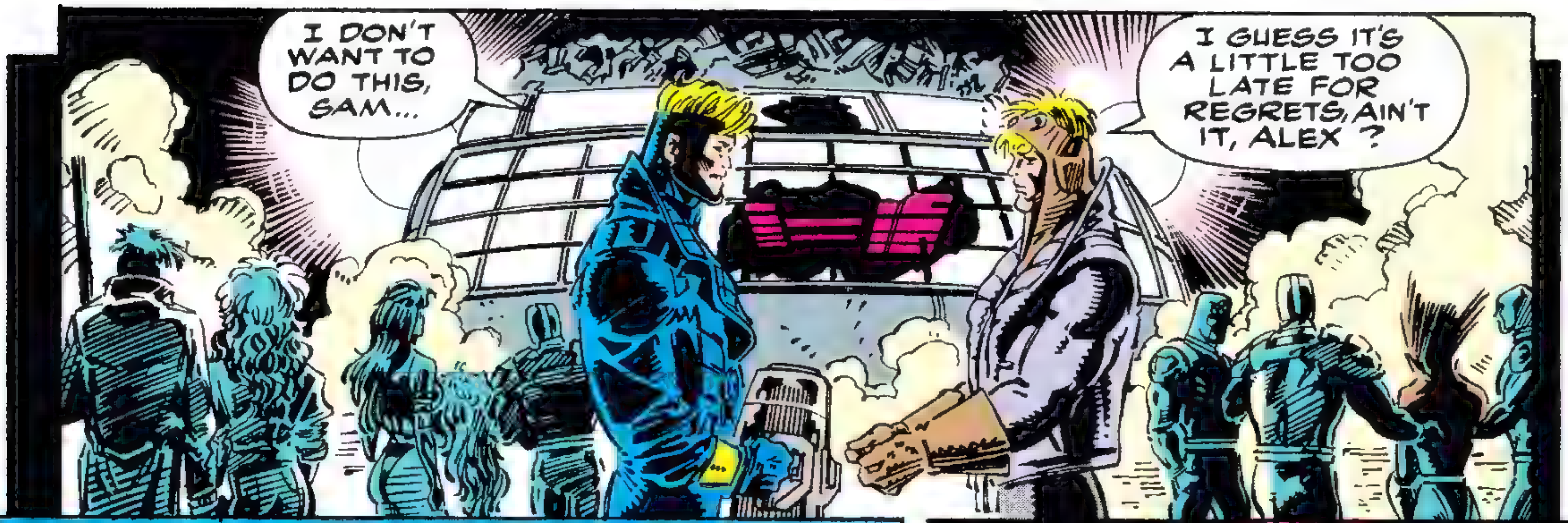
GRARRR

hagh
ffupn

MISSED--
?!!!

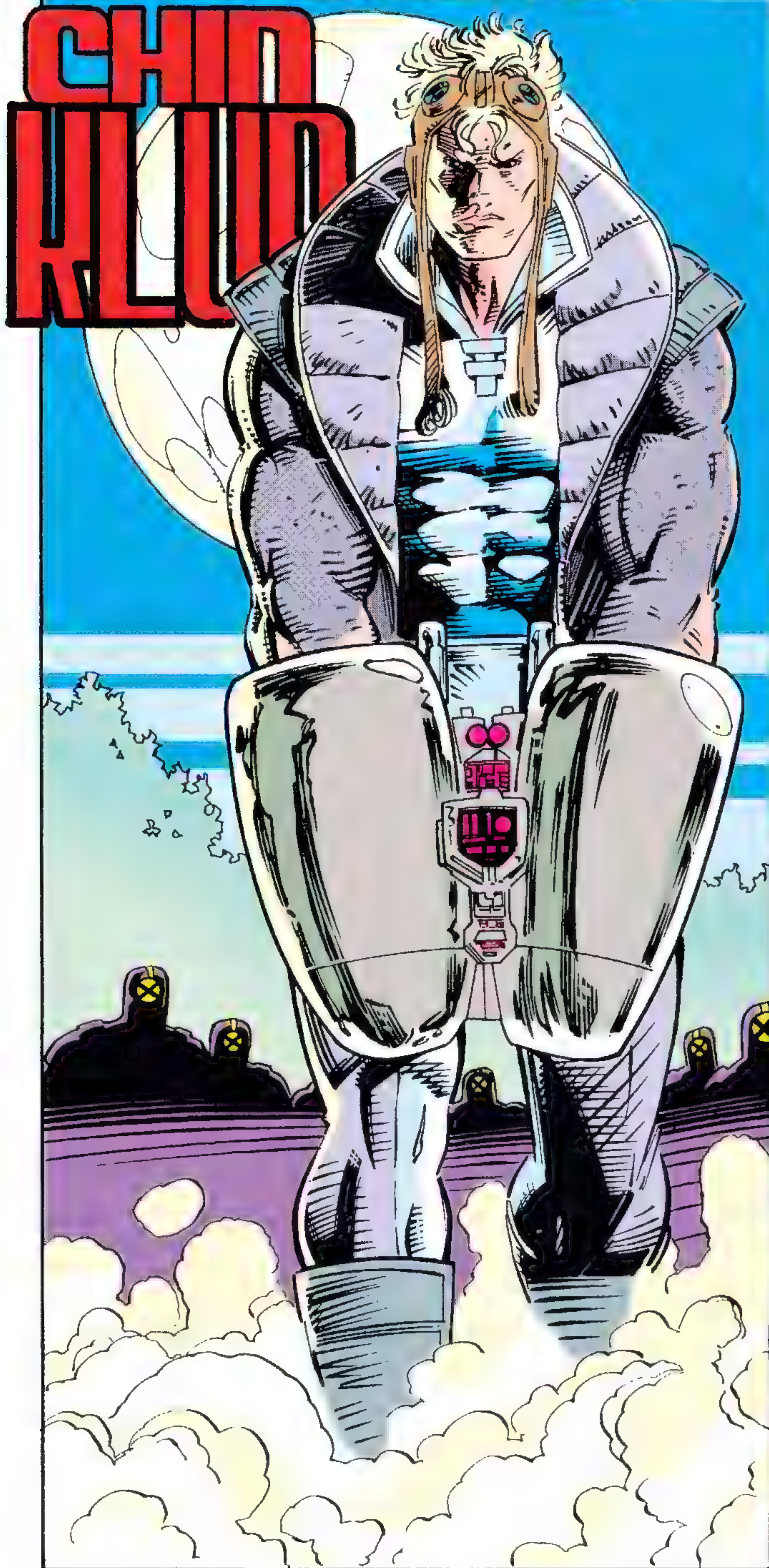




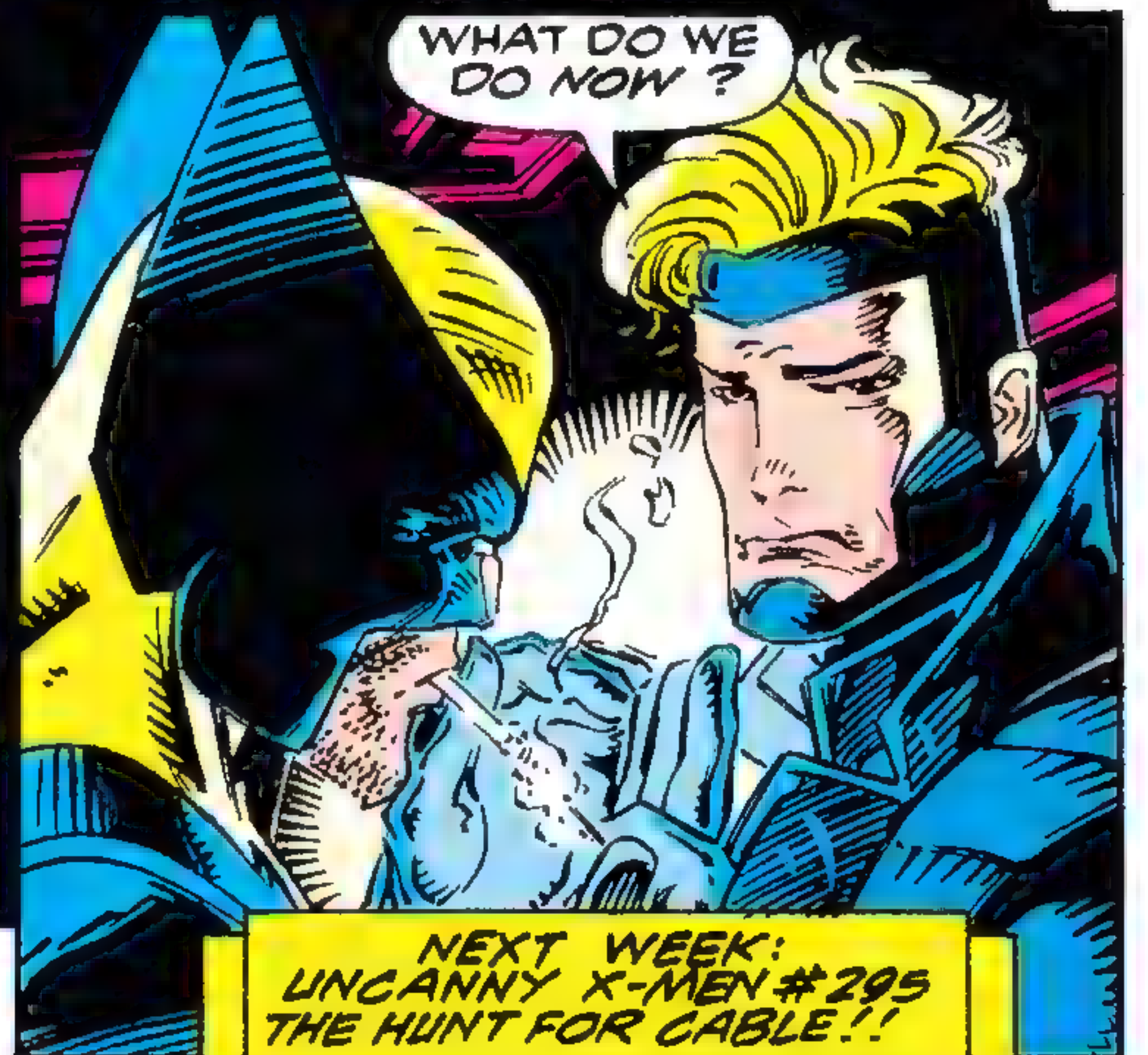
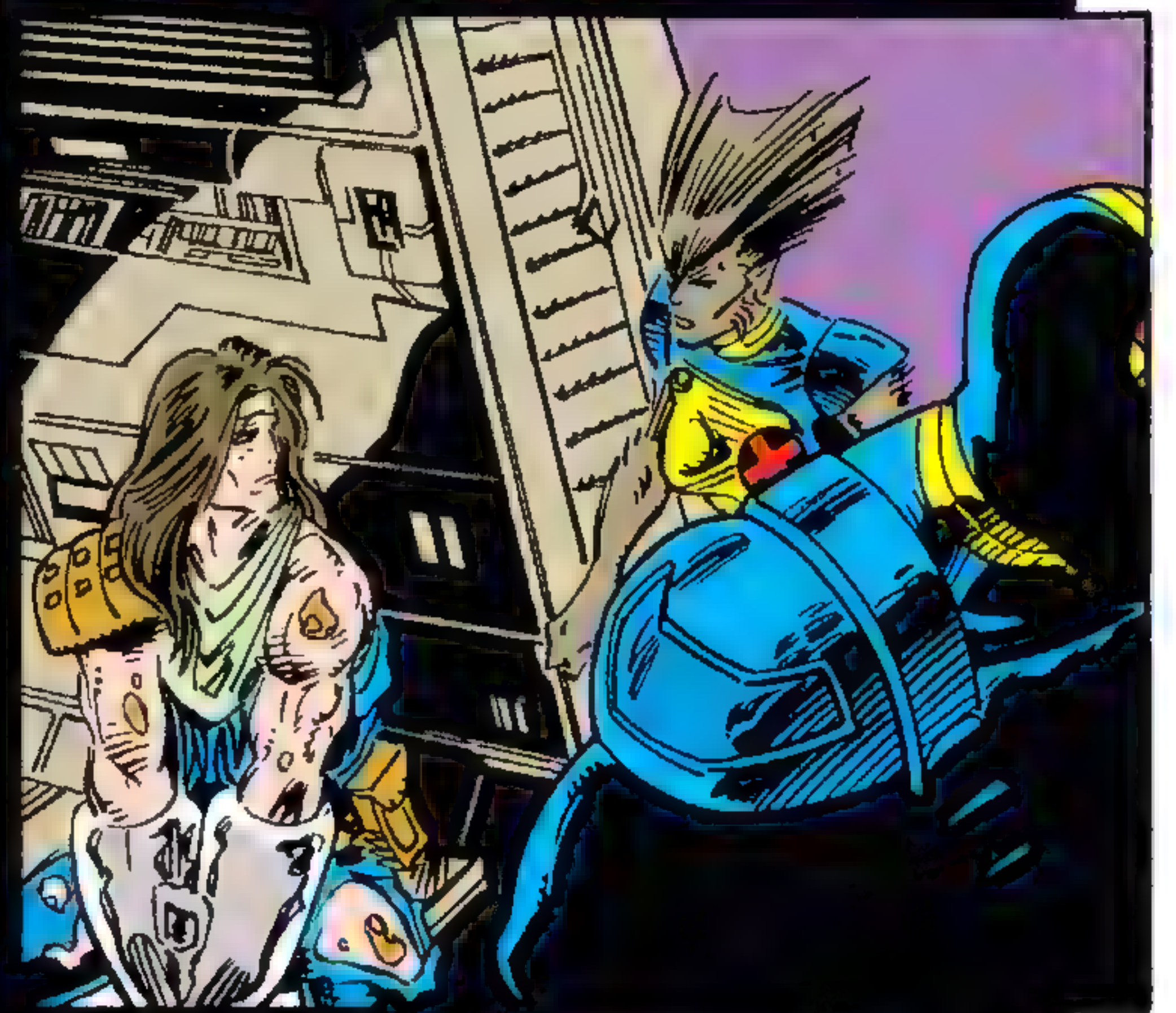
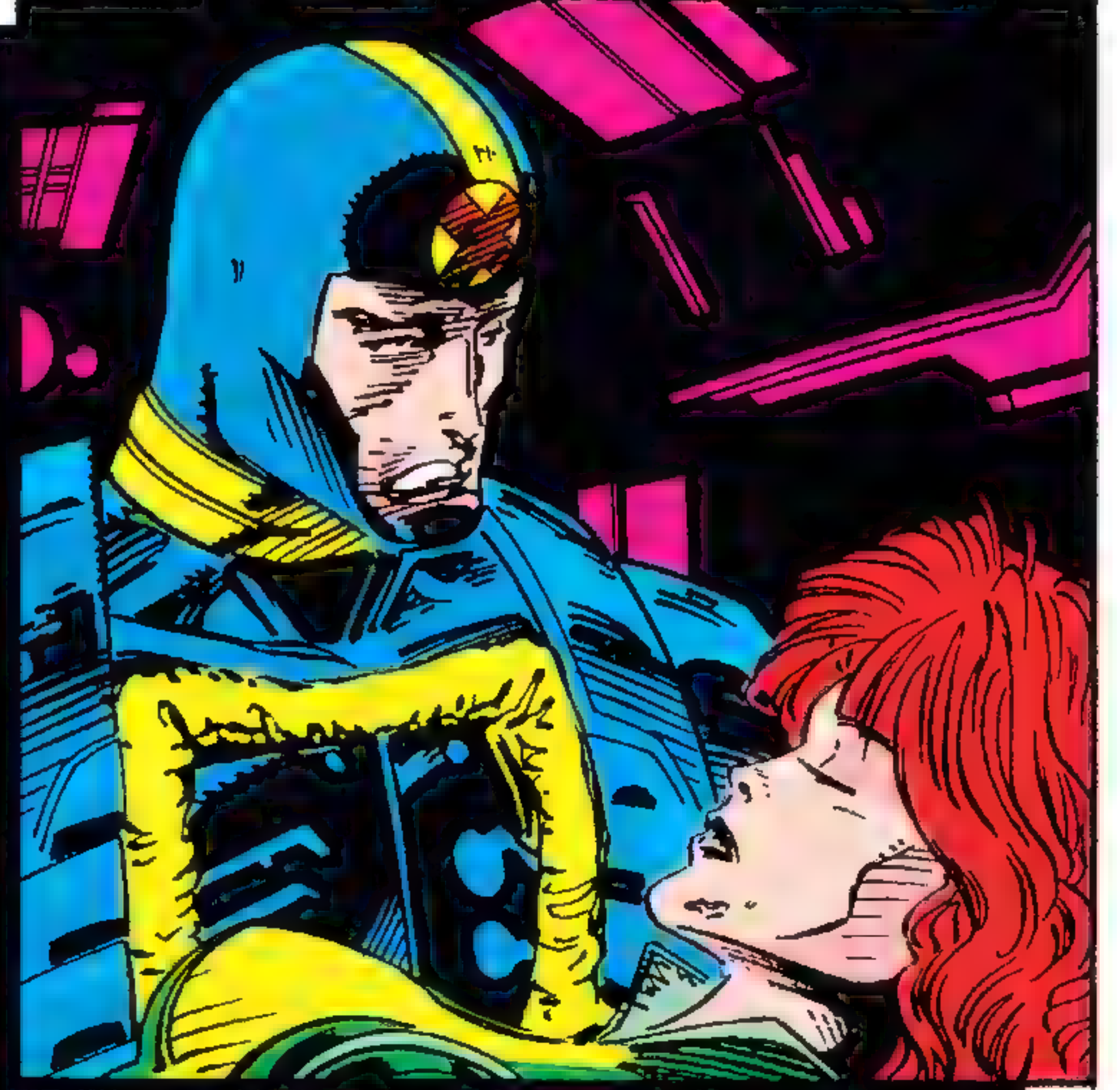


I DON'T
WANT TO
DO THIS,
SAM...

I GUESS IT'S
A LITTLE TOO
LATE FOR
REGRETS, AIN'T
IT, ALEX ?



**CHILD
KILLER**



WHAT DO WE
DO NOW ?

NEXT WEEK:
UNCANNY X-MEN #295
THE HUNT FOR CABLE!!



X-CUTIONER'S SONG

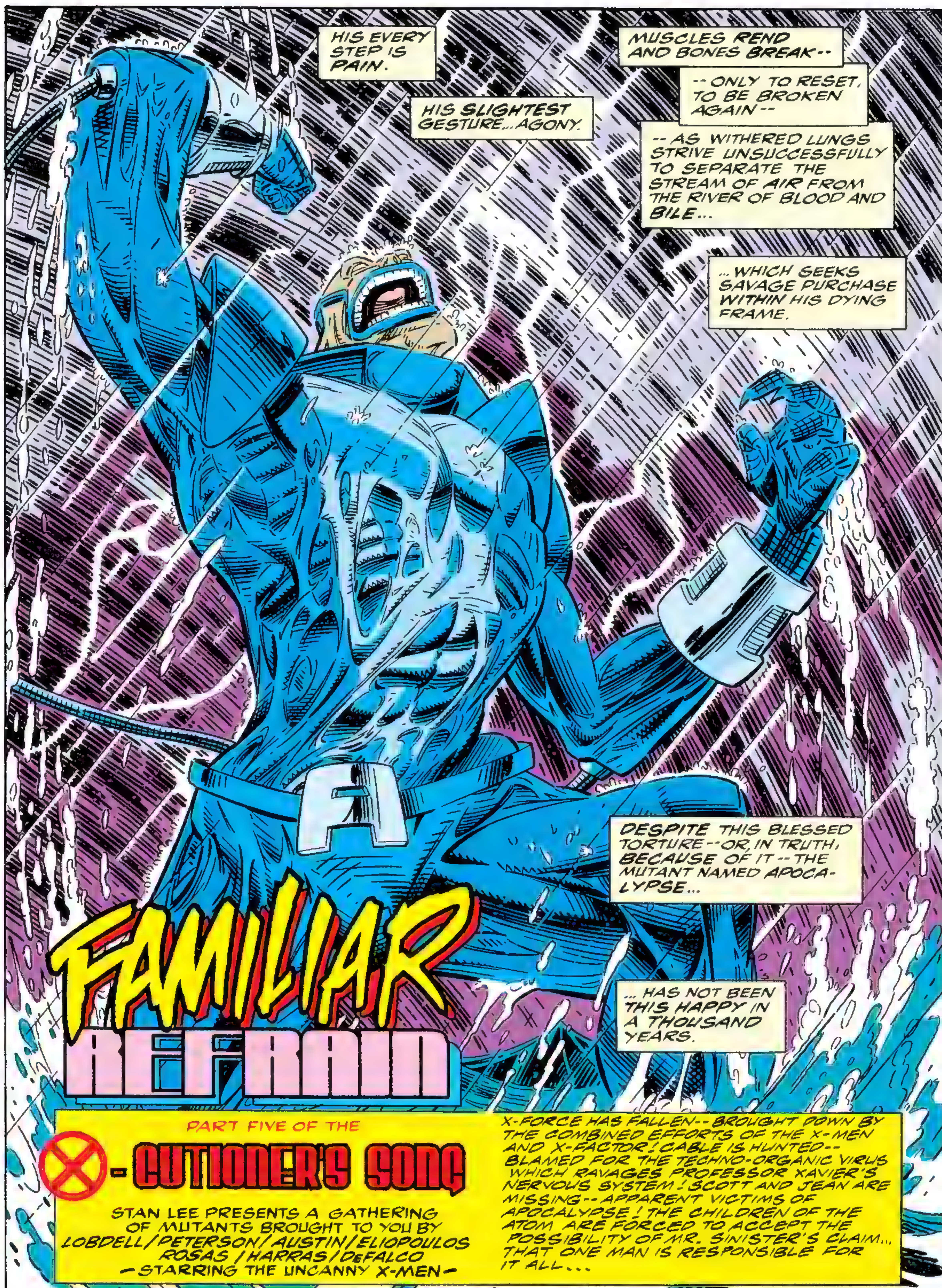
PART 5

THE UNCANNY X-MEN

\$1.50 US
\$1.80 CAN/UK 80p
295
DEC
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HIS EVERY
STEP IS
PAIN.

HIS SLIGHTEST
GESTURE... AGONY.

MUSCLES REND
AND BONES BREAK--

-- ONLY TO RESET,
TO BE BROKEN
AGAIN--

-- AS WITHERED LUNGS
STRIVE UNSUCCESSFULLY
TO SEPARATE THE
STREAM OF AIR FROM
THE RIVER OF BLOOD AND
BILE...

... WHICH SEEKS
SAVAGE PURCHASE
WITHIN HIS DYING
FRAME.

DESPITE THIS BLESSED
TORTURE--OR IN TRUTH,
BECAUSE OF IT-- THE
MUTANT NAMED APOCA-
LYPSE...

... HAS NOT BEEN
THIS HAPPY IN
A THOUSAND
YEARS.

FAMILIAR REFRAIN

PART FIVE OF THE

- CUTIONER'S SONG

STAN LEE PRESENTS A GATHERING
OF MUTANTS BROUGHT TO YOU BY
LOBDELL/PETERSON/AUSTIN/ELIOPOULOS
ROSAS/HARRAS/DEFALCO
-- STARRING THE UNCANNY X-MEN --

X-FORCE HAS FALLEN-- BROUGHT DOWN BY
THE COMBINED EFFORTS OF THE X-MEN
AND X-FACTOR! CABLE IS HUNTED--
BLAMED FOR THE TECHNO-ORGANIC VIRUS
WHICH RAVAGES PROFESSOR XAVIER'S
NERVOUS SYSTEM! SCOTT AND JEAN ARE
MISSING-- APPARENT VICTIMS OF
APOCALYPSE! THE CHILDREN OF THE
ATOM ARE FORCED TO ACCEPT THE
POSSIBILITY OF MR. SINISTER'S CLAIM...
THAT ONE MAN IS RESPONSIBLE FOR
IT ALL...

FROM THE MOMENT
HIS MASTER'S
WHIP FIRST BIT
DEEP INTO HIS ALL
TOO MALLEABLE
FLESH--

-- APOCALYPSE
UNDERSTOOD THE
SECRET OF
LIFE IS NOT IN
LIVING--

...BUT RATHER, IN
SURVIVING.

IT IS THIS ONE
BASIC TRUTH
HE HAS SPENT
A LIFETIME--

--A SCORE
OF LIFETIMES--

-- TRYING TO
IMPART UPON
HIS GENETIC
BRETHREN.

ONLY THE STRONGEST
SURVIVE--EVER FEASTING
UPON THE BONES OF THE
WEAK AND UNFIT.

HE ALSO LEARNED,
A LONG TIME AGO..

...NO ONE
LOVES A
PROPHET.

WHOEVER
YOU ARE--

--YOU MUST
KNOW I :COH:
WILL NOT
YIELD.

FOR I TAKE
SUSTENANCE--
I TAKE JOY--
IN THE
STRUGGLE
WITH MY PAIN!

SUMMONED TOO
SOON :HMPH: FROM
THE EMBRYONIC
EMBRACE OF MY
RESTORATIVE WOMB..*

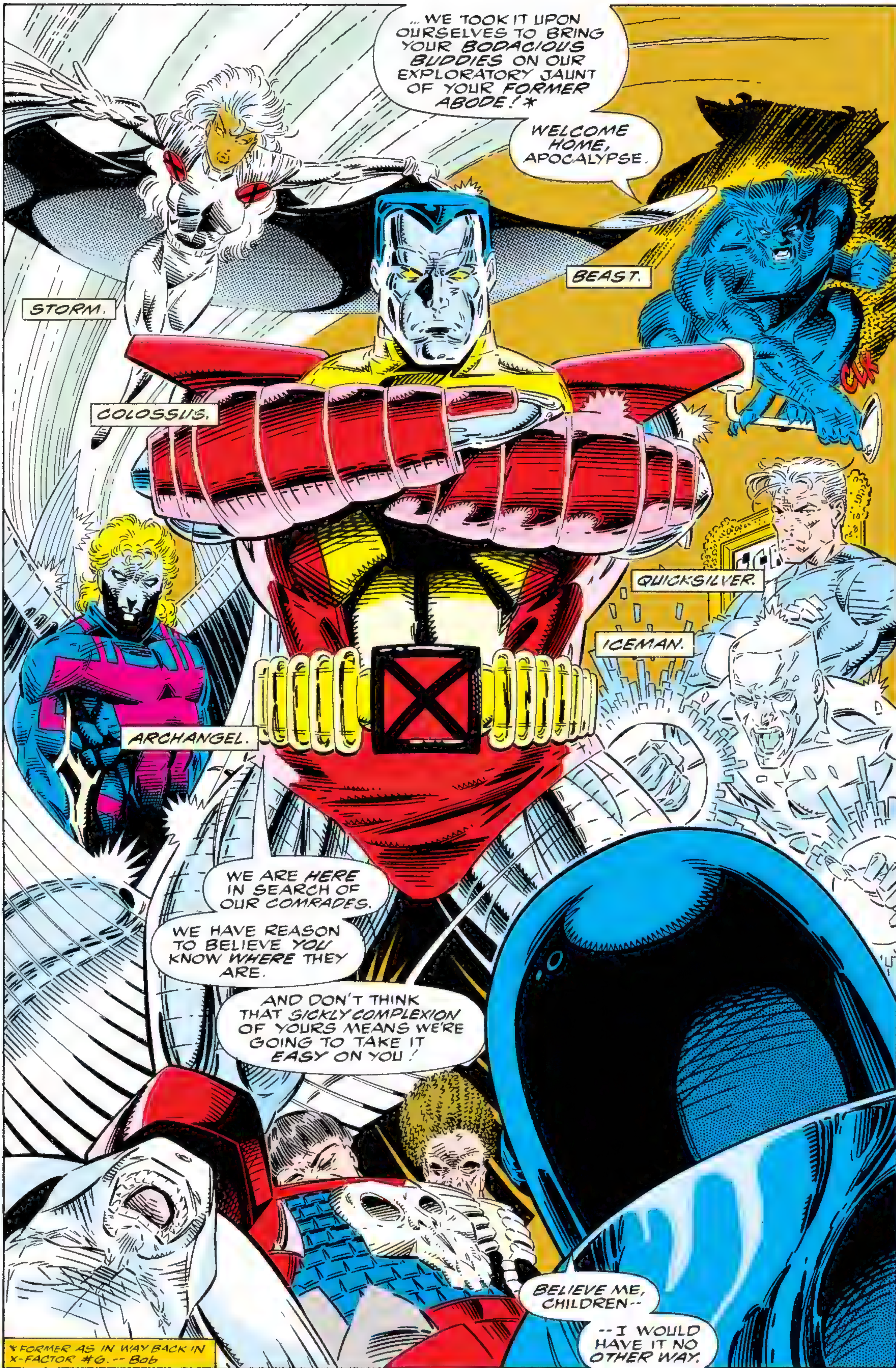
*X-MEN #14..Bob

... I WILL
:KAK: SEEK-
OUT MY
HORSEMEN!

I WILL KNOW *WHY*
THEY SOUGHT TO
CHALLENGE THE
X-MEN--THE GREAT
UNWASHED--ON
THEIR OWN
INITIATIVE.**

HOW
FORTUITOUS
FOR YOU, OH
ANCIENTEST
OF
ADVERSARIES...

**LAST ISSUE..Bob?



... WE TOOK IT UPON OURSELVES TO BRING YOUR **BODACIOUS BUDDIES** ON OUR EXPLORATORY JAUNT OF YOUR FORMER ABODE! *

WELCOME HOME, APOCALYPSE.

STORM.

BEAST.

COLOSSUS.

QUICKSILVER.

ICEMAN.

ARCHANGEL.

WE ARE HERE IN SEARCH OF OUR COMRADES.

WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE YOU KNOW WHERE THEY ARE.

AND DON'T THINK THAT SICKLY COMPLEXION OF YOURS MEANS WE'RE GOING TO TAKE IT EASY ON YOU!

BELIEVE ME, CHILDREN--

-- I WOULD HAVE IT NO OTHER WAY.

PROFESSOR XAVIER'S
SCHOOL FOR GIFTED
YOUNGSTERS.

SALEM CENTER,
NEW YORK.

WITH THE ASSASSINATION
ATTEMPT OF THE SCHOOL'S
FOUNDER AND HEAD-
MASTER-- *

--EVEN THE COOL AUTUMN
WINDS WHISPER QUIETLY,
RESPECTFULLY AS THEY WAFT
ABOUT THE XAVIER ESTATE.

INSIDE,
HOWEVER...

...ANOTHER PRIMAL FORCE
OF NATURE IS HANDLING
THE SITUATION IN A DIFFERENT
MANNER ALTOGETHER.

--AND I'LL
SAY IT AGAIN,
LOSER!

YER NOTHIN'
BUT A WHINING
BUNCH O' HEAD-
PADDED

HYPER-
THYROIDED

PIG-
HEADED

SPOILED
BRAT

POORLY
DRESSED

OVERLY
ACCESSORIZED

DELUSIONALLY
DISADVANTAGED X-MEN
WANNABES

IN MAJOR NEED OF
A TOTAL 'TUDE
ADJUSTMENT!

ARE YOU
FINISHED,
JUBILEE?

NOT
HARDLY!

*LAST ISSUE--B.H.

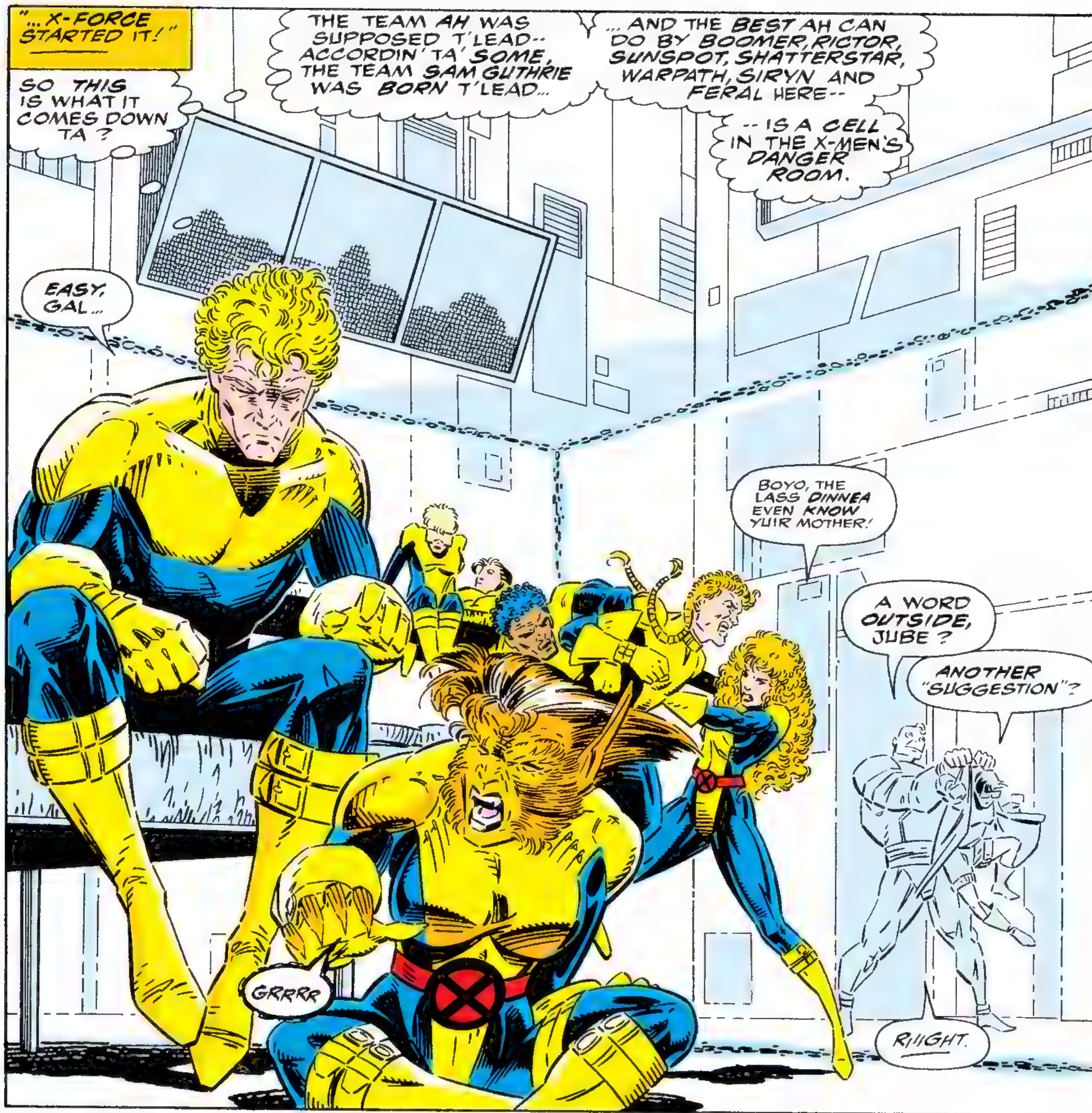
YOU'RE NOT
EVEN--

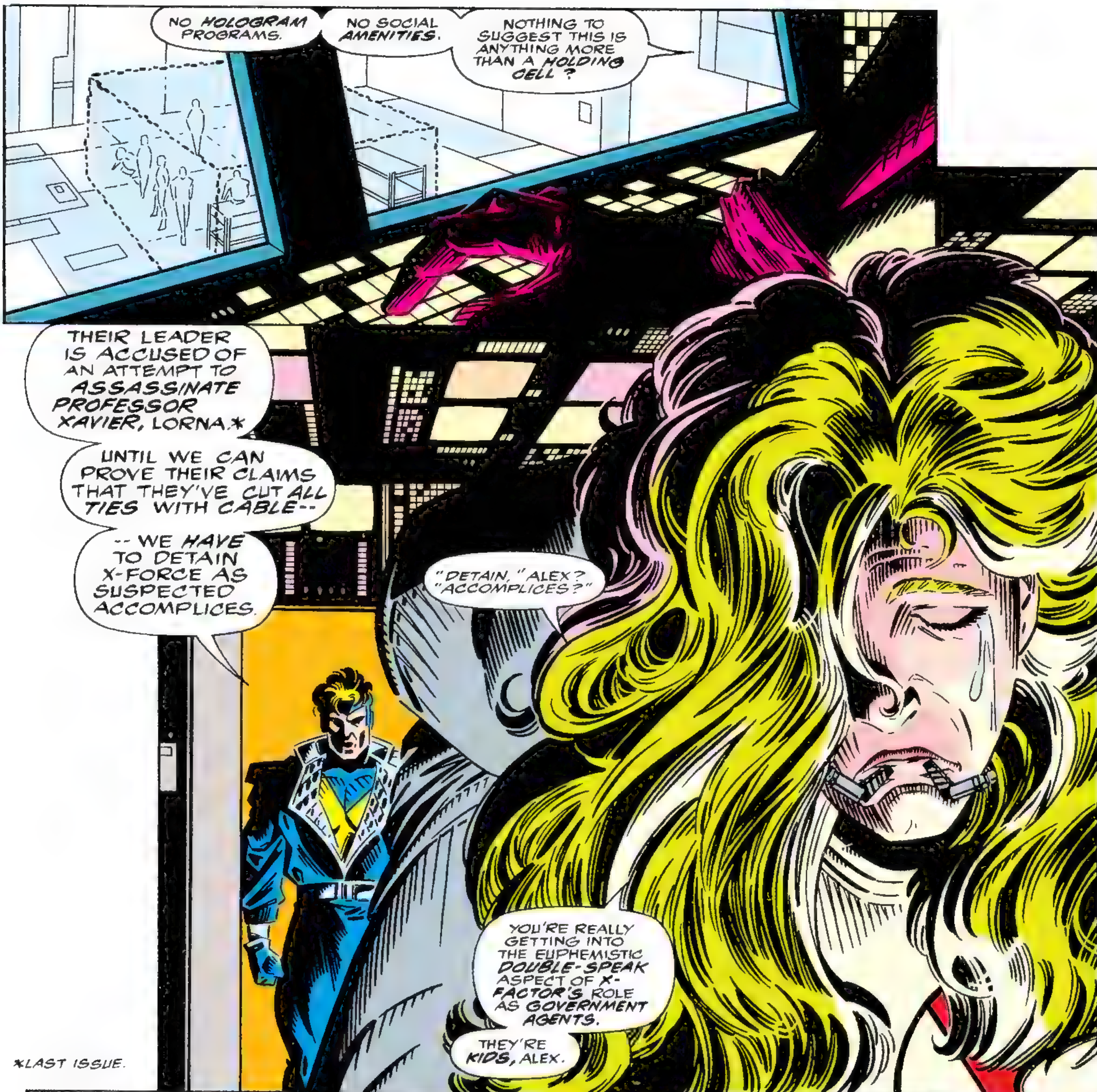
MAYBE YOU
OUGHTA REPHRASE
THAT.

"JUBILEE.
YOU ARE
FINISHED."

LEMMEGO, YA'
THIRD-GENERATION
COLOSSUS KNOCK-
OFF...

WANK!





NO HOLOGRAM PROGRAMS.

NO SOCIAL AMENITIES.

NOTHING TO SUGGEST THIS IS ANYTHING MORE THAN A HOLDING CELL?

THEIR LEADER IS ACCUSED OF AN ATTEMPT TO ASSASSINATE PROFESSOR XAVIER, LORNA.*

UNTIL WE CAN PROVE THEIR CLAIMS THAT THEY'VE CUT ALL TIES WITH CABLE--

-- WE HAVE TO DETAIN X-FORCE AS SUSPECTED ACCOMPLICES.

"DETAIN," ALEX?
"ACCOMPLICES?"

YOU'RE REALLY GETTING INTO THE EUPHEMISTIC DOUBLE-SPEAK ASPECT OF X-FACTOR'S ROLE AS GOVERNMENT AGENTS.

THEY'RE KIDS, ALEX.

*LAST ISSUE.

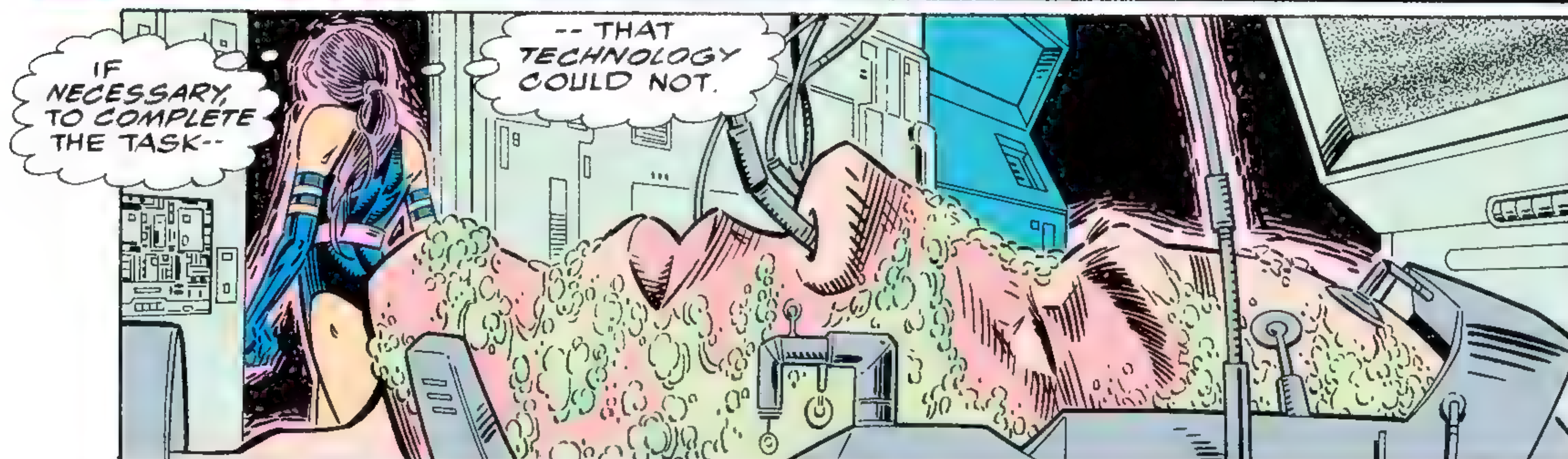
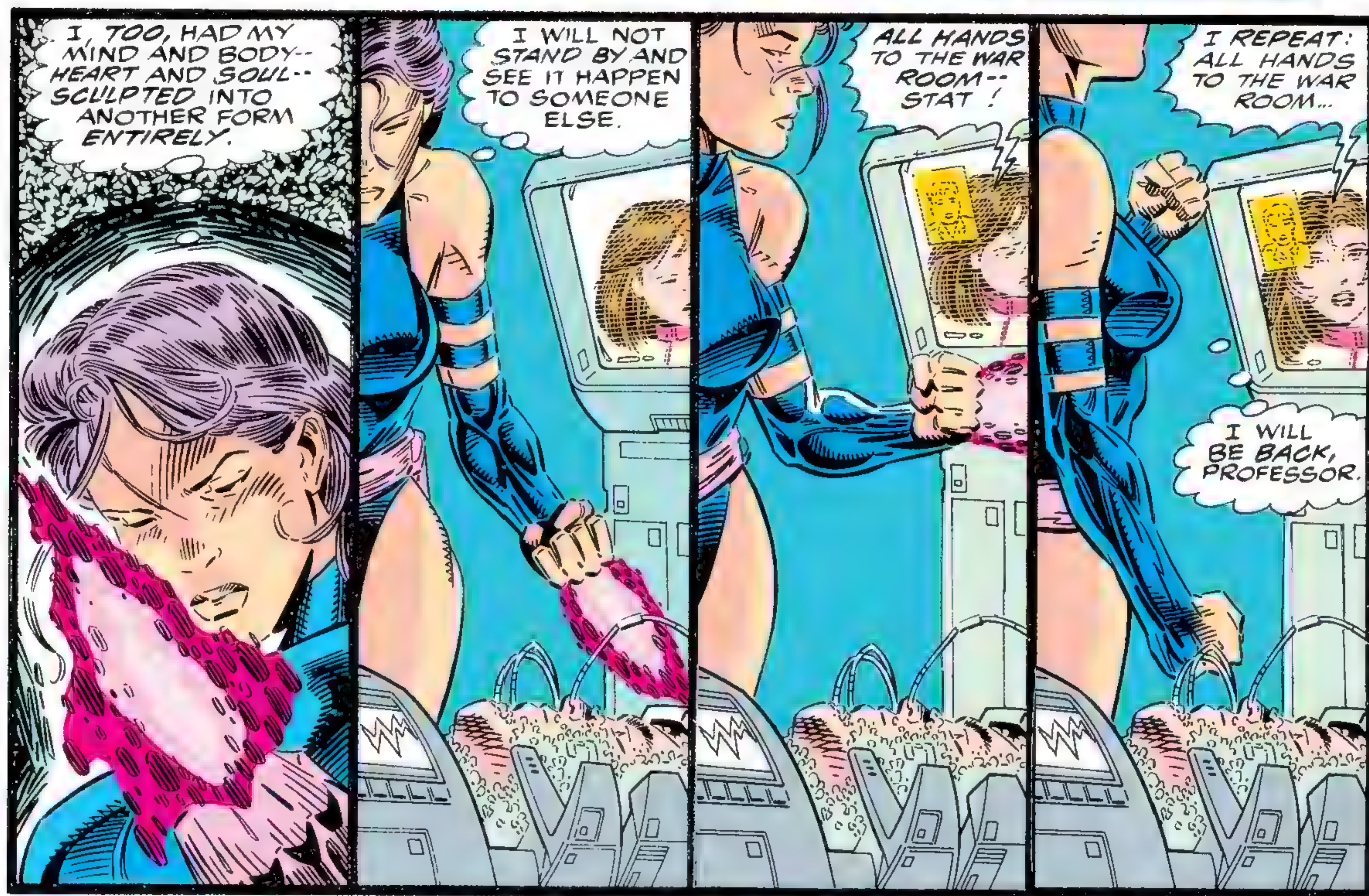
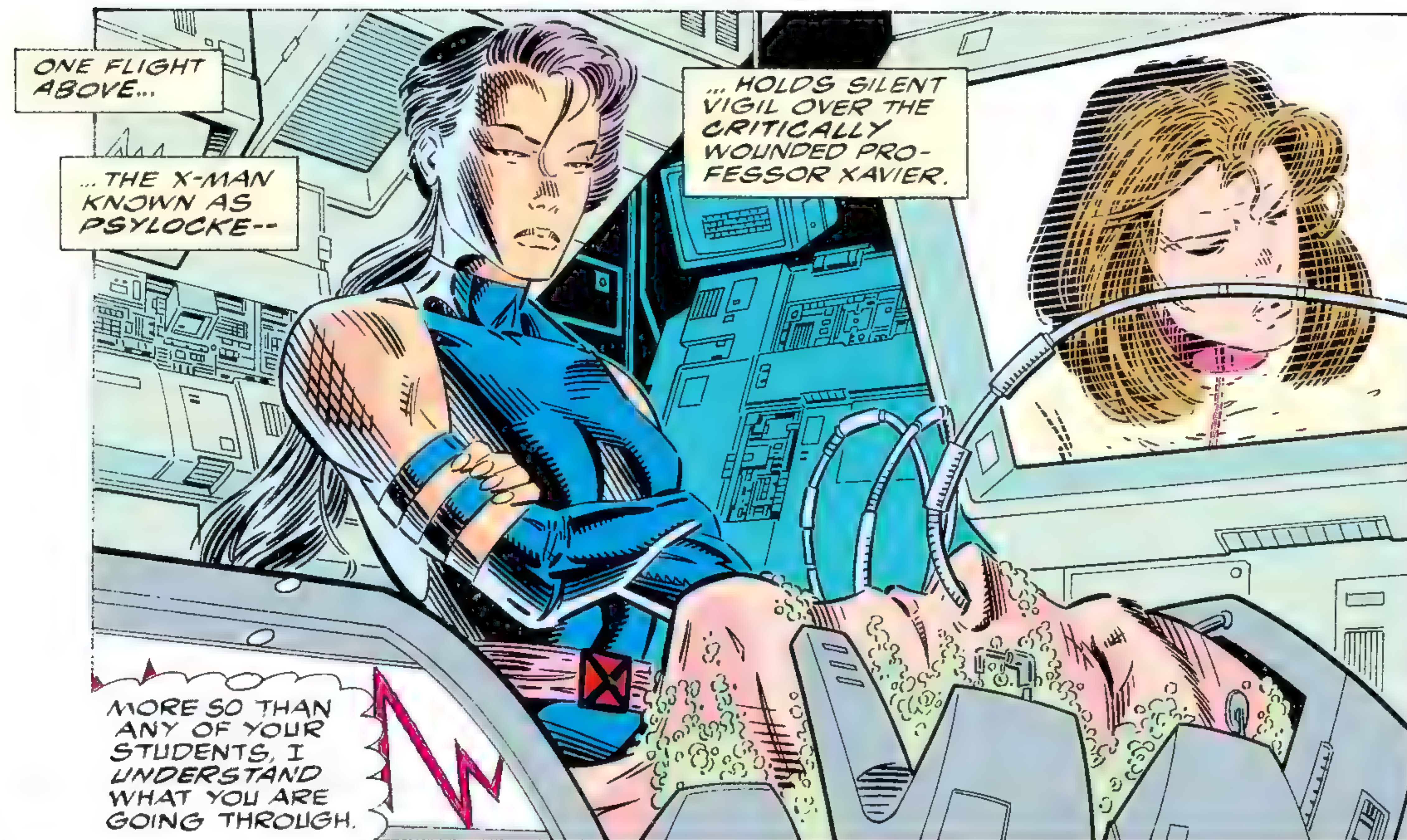
NO OLDER THAN WE WERE WHEN WE STARTED OUT.

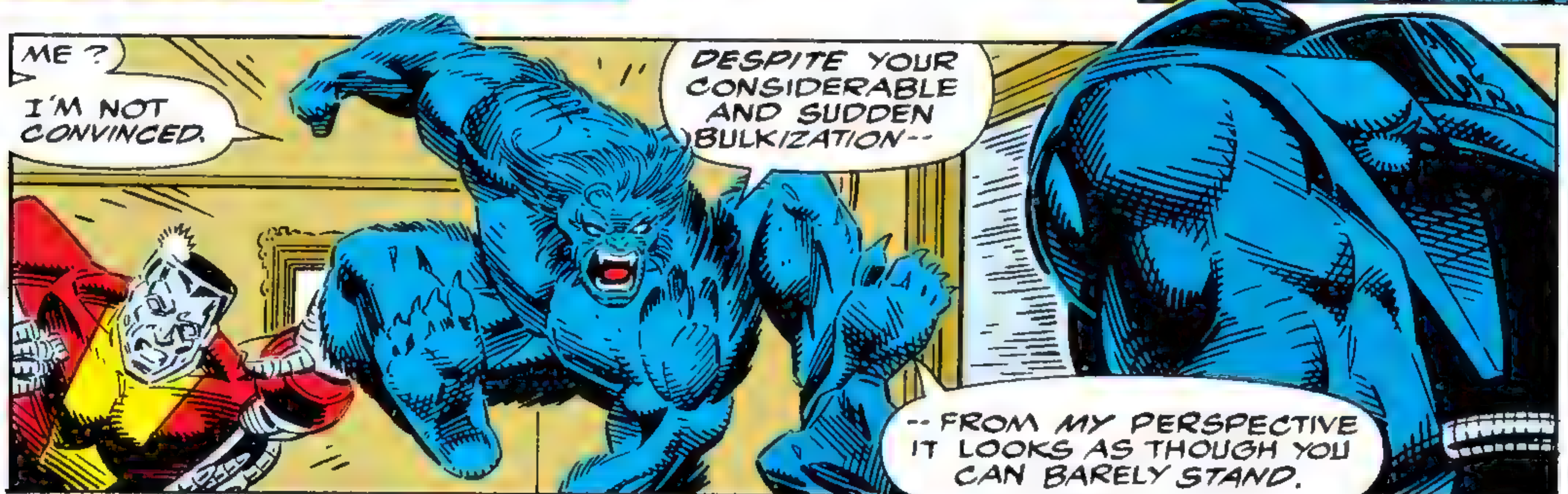
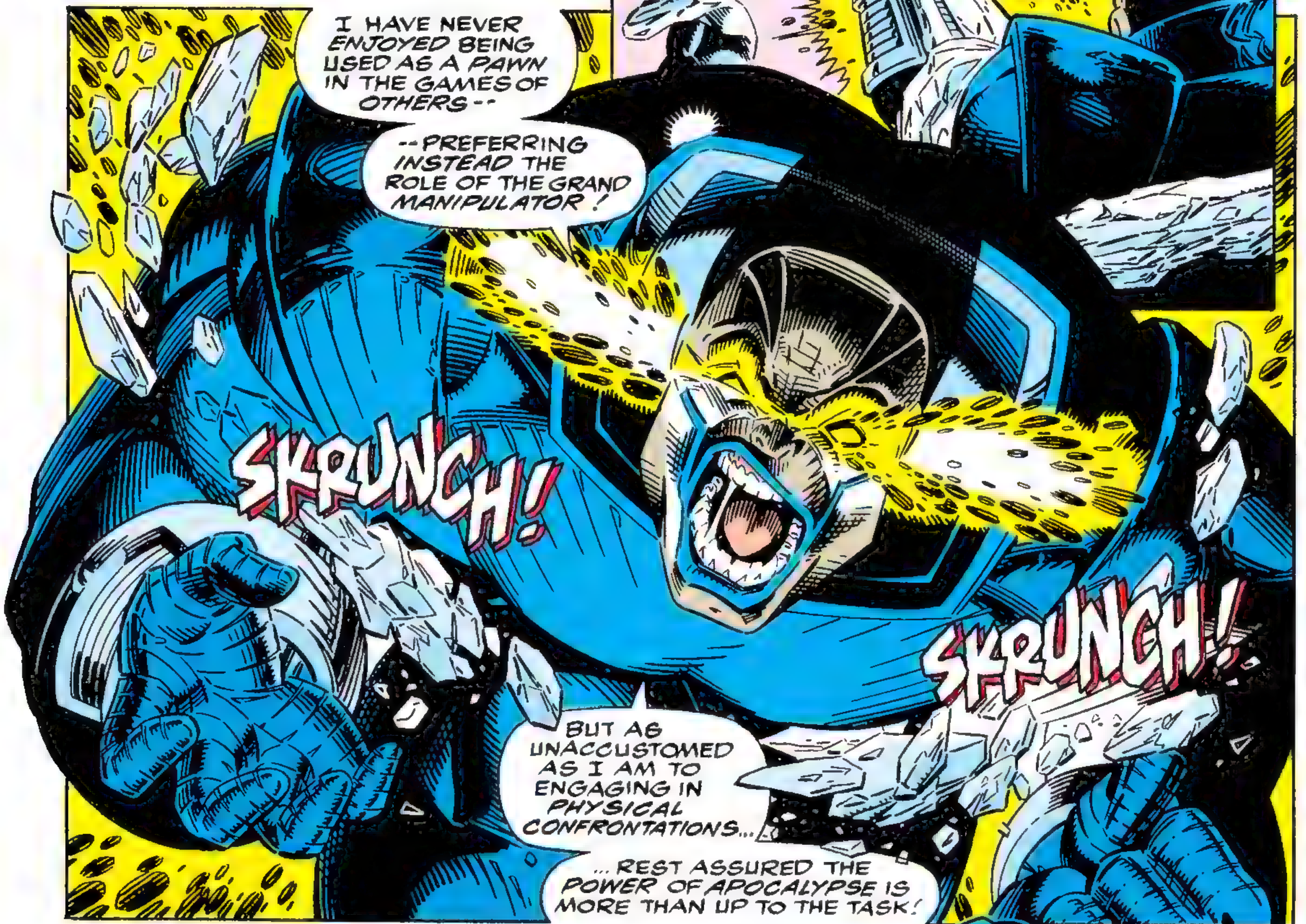
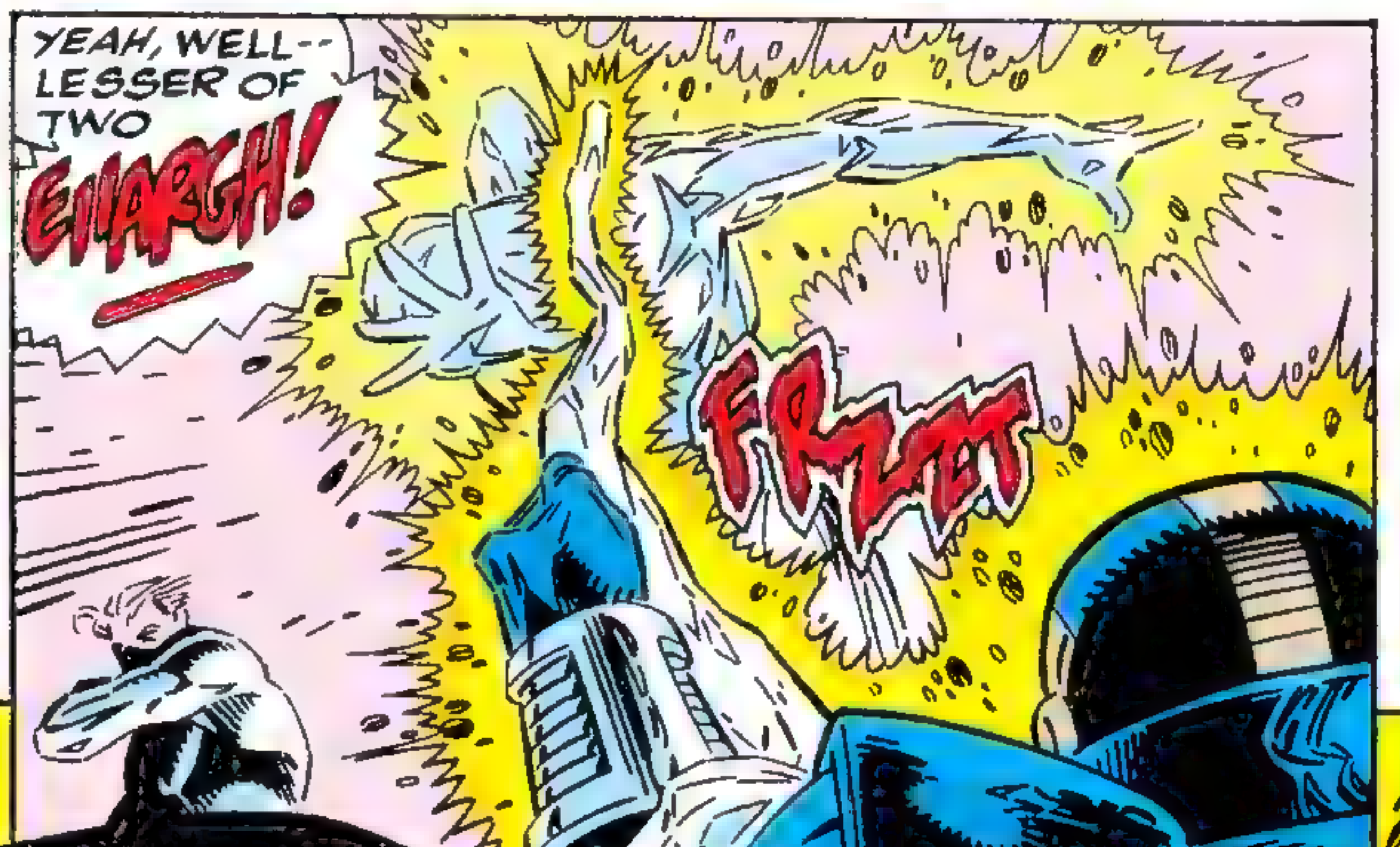
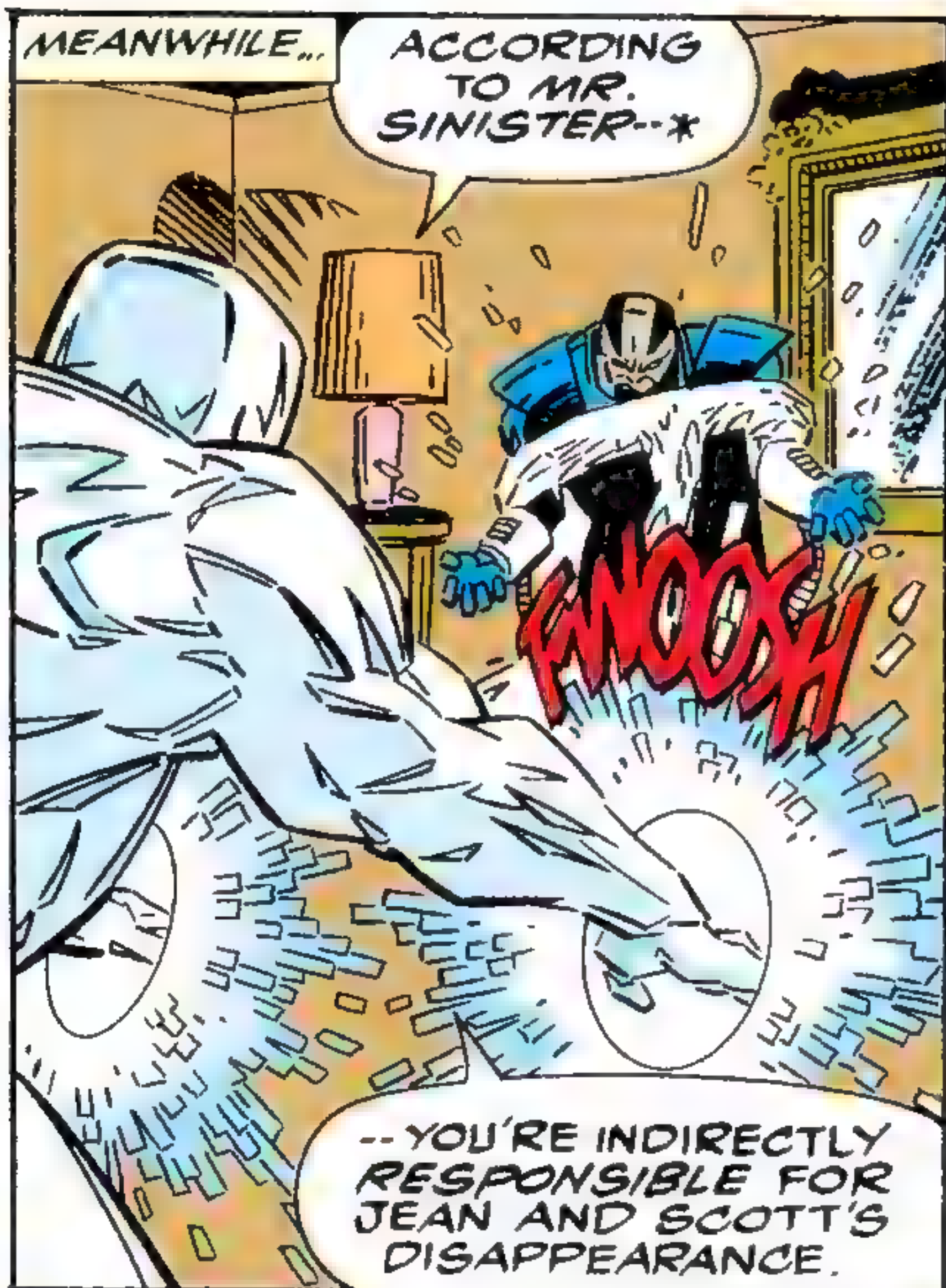
WHAT HAPPENED?

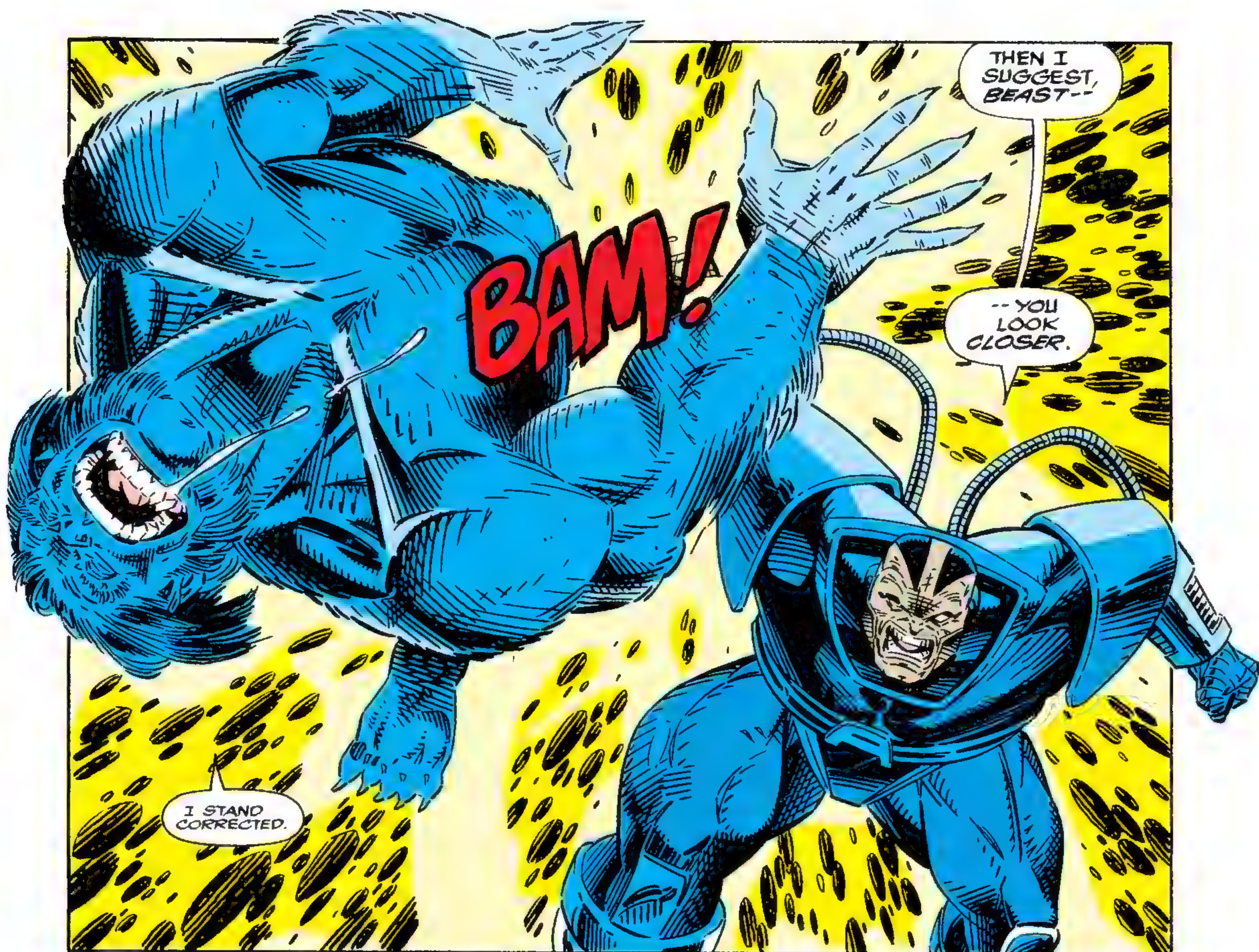
LIFE.

LIFE HAPPENED.

WE HAVE TO GO...
...VAL NEEDS US IN DE-BRIEFING.







THEN I
SUGGEST,
BEAST--

-- YOU
LOOK
CLOSER.

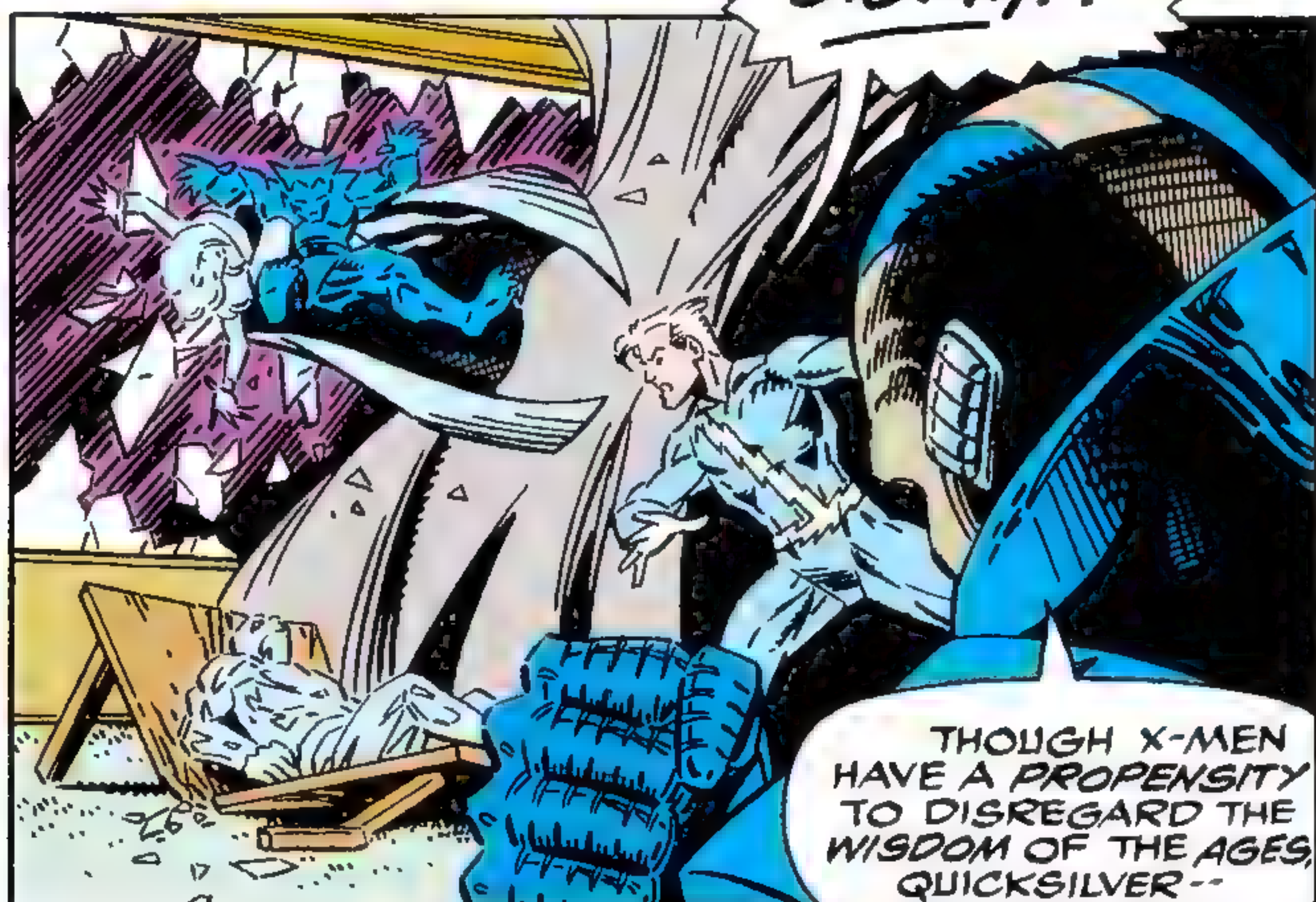
I STAND
CORRECTED.

MUST CATCH
HENRY. ABSORB
IMPACT BE--

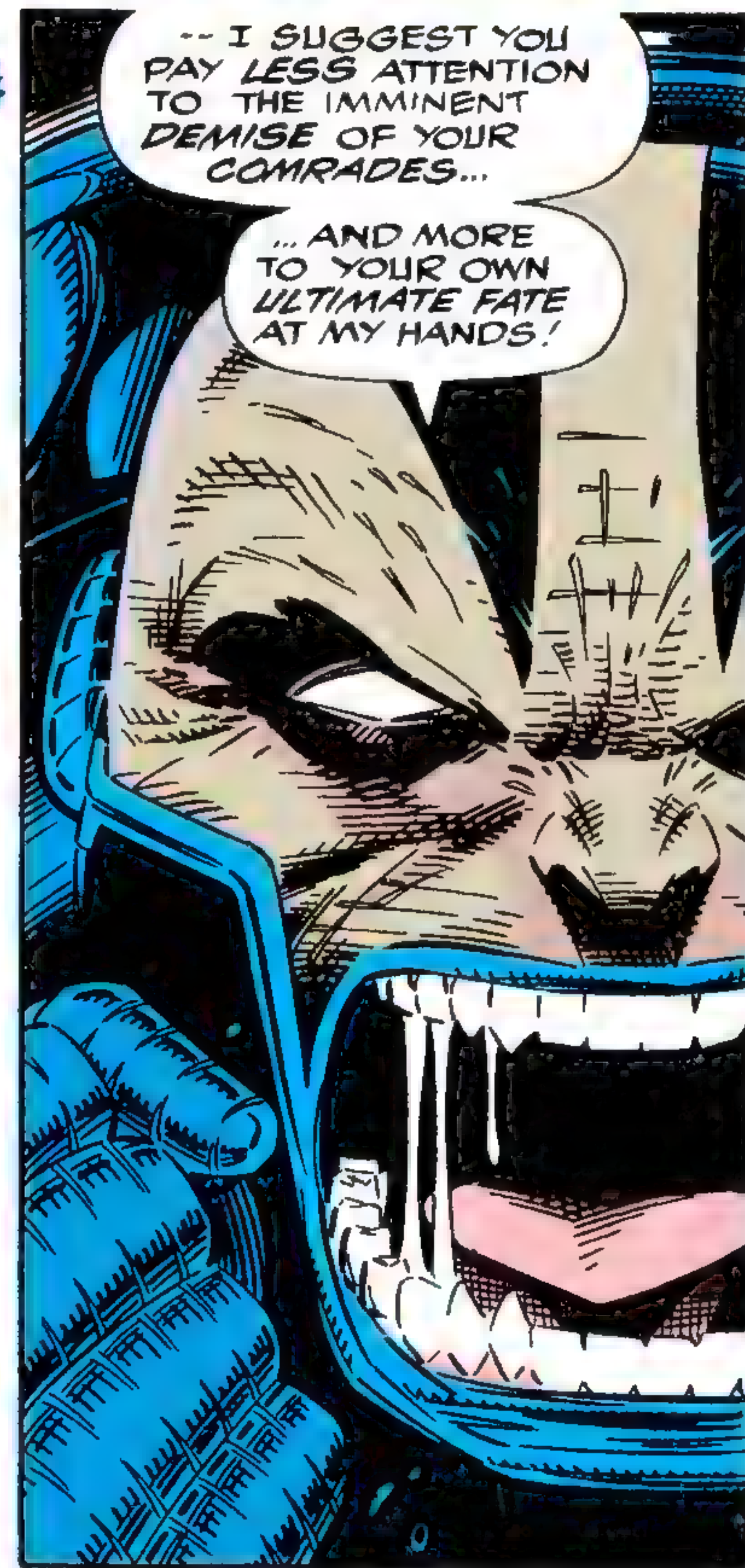
UNGH!

WOMP!

STORM!?



THOUGH X-MEN
HAVE A PROPENSITY
TO DISREGARD THE
WISDOM OF THE AGES,
QUICKSILVER--



-- I SUGGEST YOU
PAY LESS ATTENTION
TO THE IMMINENT
DEMISE OF YOUR
COMRADES...

... AND MORE
TO YOUR OWN
ULTIMATE FATE
AT MY HANDS!



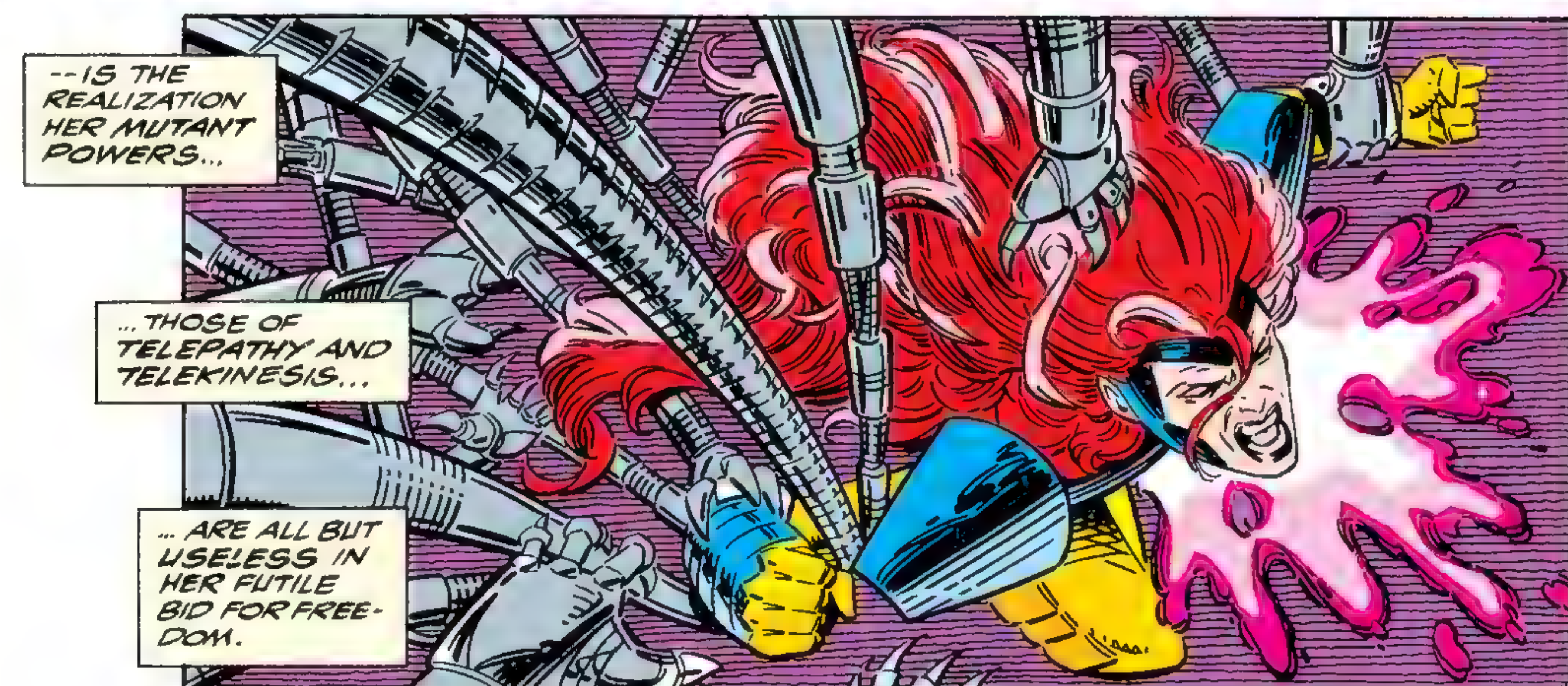
SOMPLACE
ELSE...

IT HAS BEEN HOURS
SINCE JEAN GREY
WAS SEPARATED
FROM SCOTT SUMMERS.

SHE HAS SPENT
EVERY MOMENT
SINCE ON THE
RUN--

--UNABLE TO BREAK THE
GRIP OF A HUNDRED
THOUSAND SERVO-ARMS
THAT PUSH AND SHOVE
AND PAW AND GROPE.

TO ADD TO HER
HUMILIATION-- THE
OVERWHELMING
CRUSH OF HOPE-
LESSNESS--



--IS THE
REALIZATION
HER MUTANT
POWERS...

...THOSE OF
TELEPATHY AND
TELEKINESIS...

... ARE ALL BUT
USELESS IN
HER FUTILE
BID FOR FREE-
DOM.

TO HER CREDIT, SHE
SUFFERS THIS OUTRAGE
IN SILENCE...

... KNOWING HER ASSAILANT'S
DEEPEST DESIRE IS TO HEAR
HER CRY OUT IN PAIN AND
DESPAIR.

HE WANTS THE
SOUND OF HER
BEGGING FOR
MERCY--

-- TO DROWN
OUT THE ROAR
OF HIS JOYLESS
LAUGHTER.

SHE REFUSES
TO ALLOW HIM
THE SATISFAC-
TION.

A
HORRIFYING
FEELING, NO?

BRUMP!

TO BE
CLUTCHED
AND CLAWED
BY STRANGE,
UNFEELING--
UNCARING--
ALIEN HANDS?

NOT AT ALL
UNLIKE--

-- I MUST
ASSUME--

-- WHAT AN
INNOCENT
BABE FEELS
WHEN
BEREFT OF
THE LOVE
AND WARMTH
THAT IS ITS
BIRTHRIGHT?

WOULDN'T YOU
AGREE ?

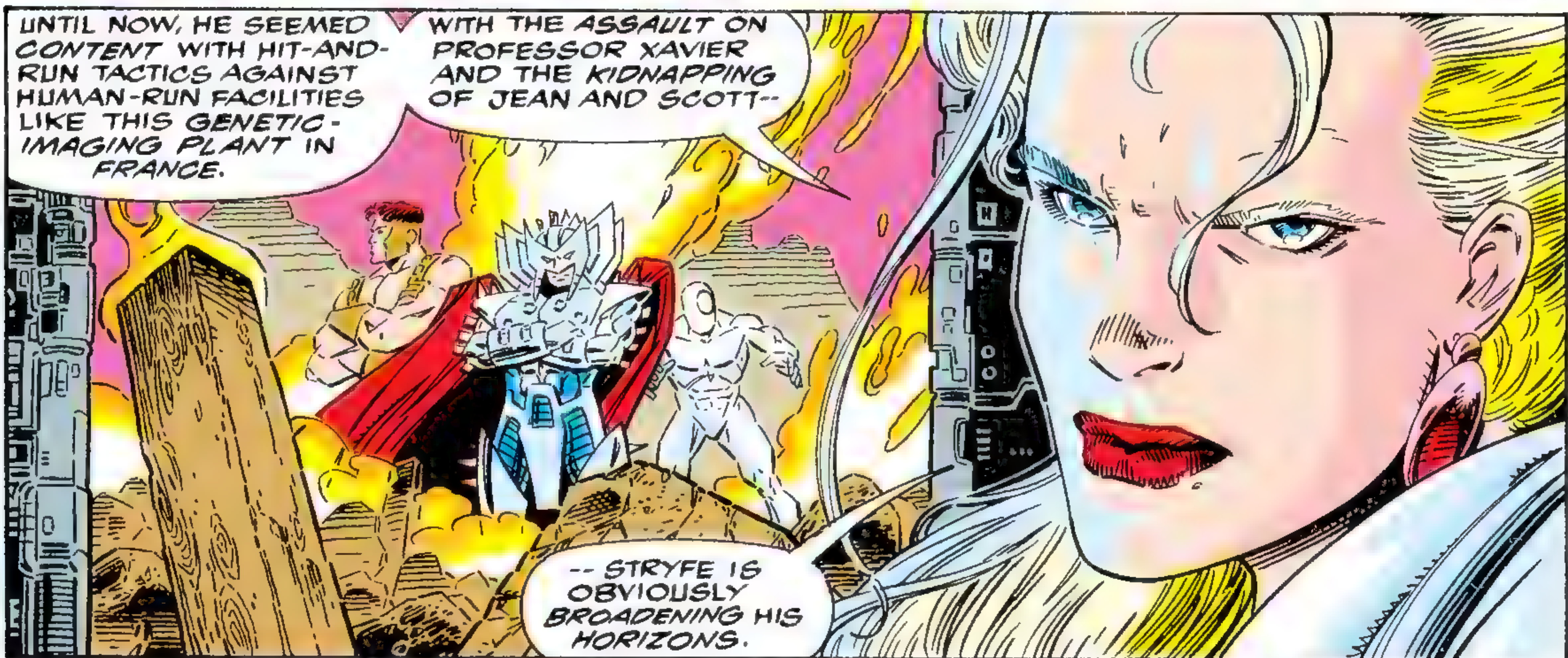
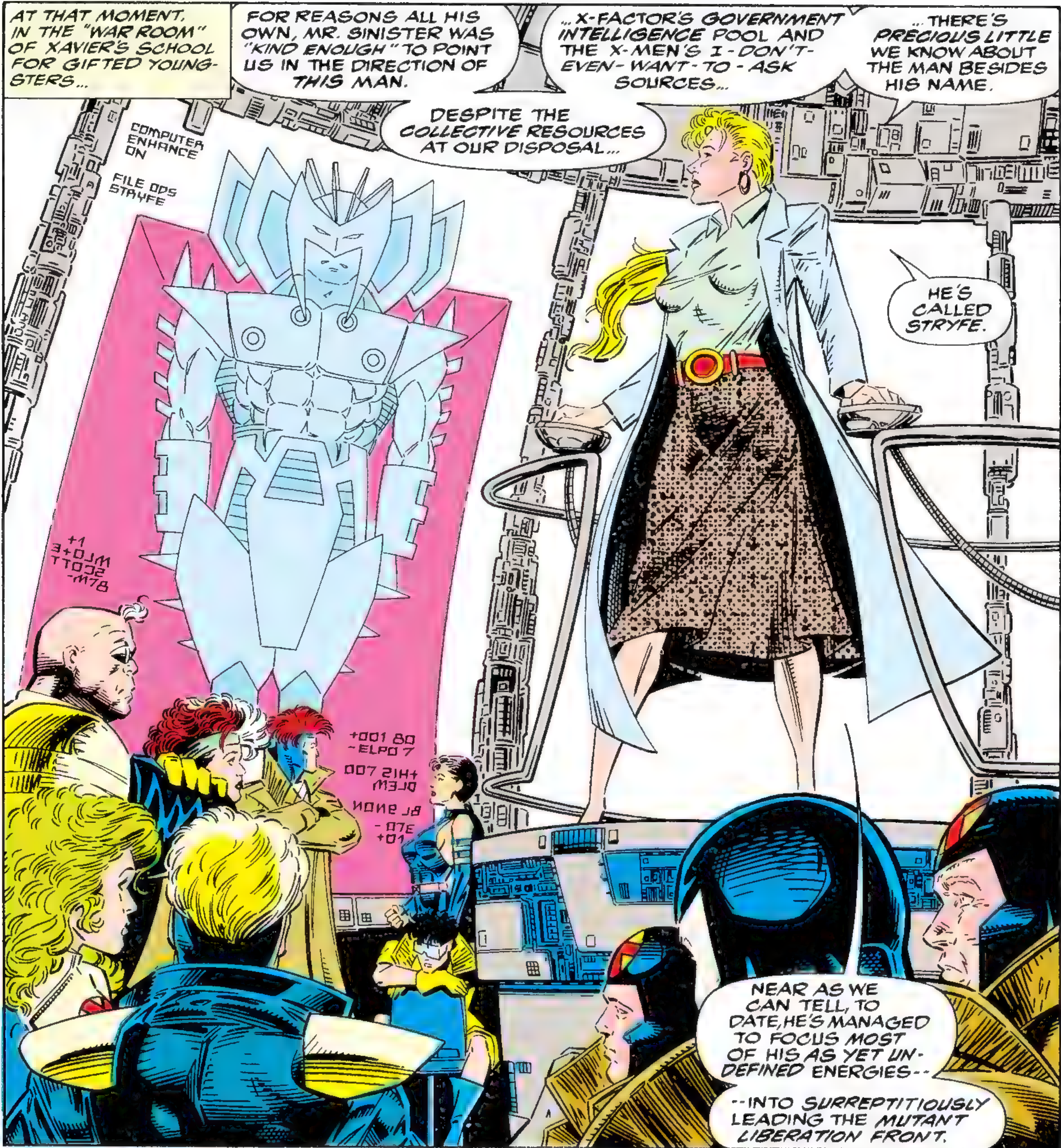
WHY

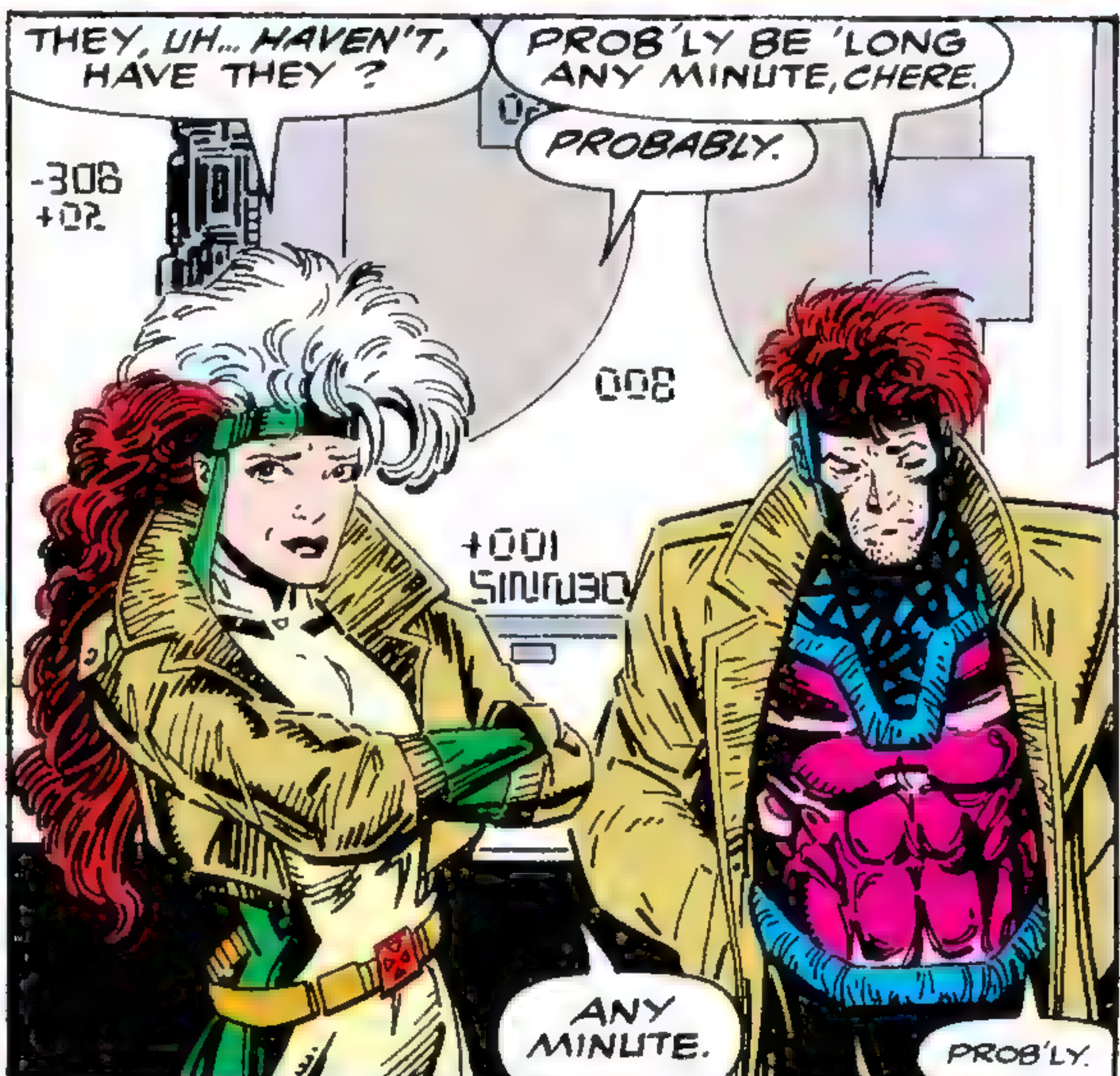
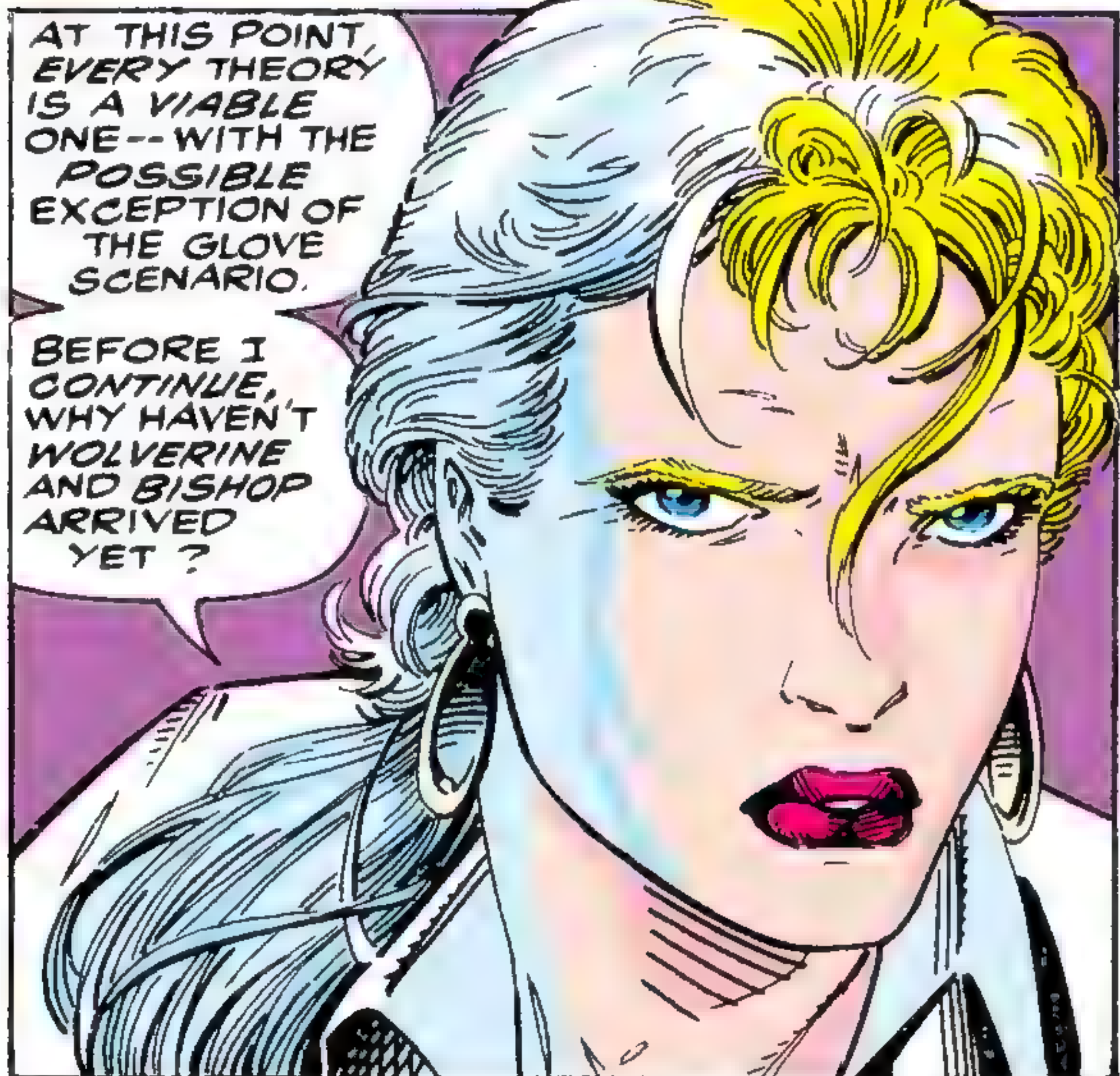
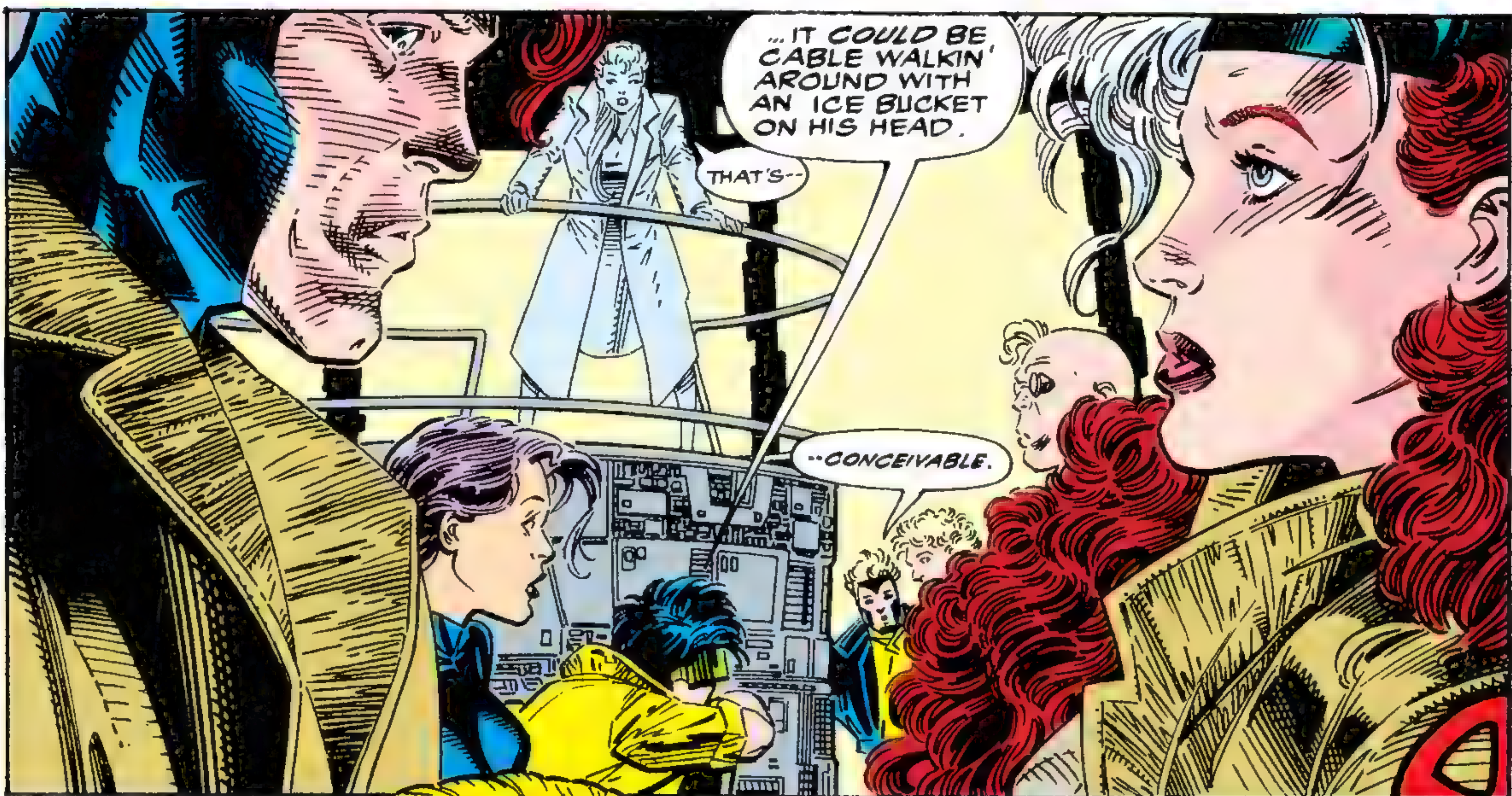
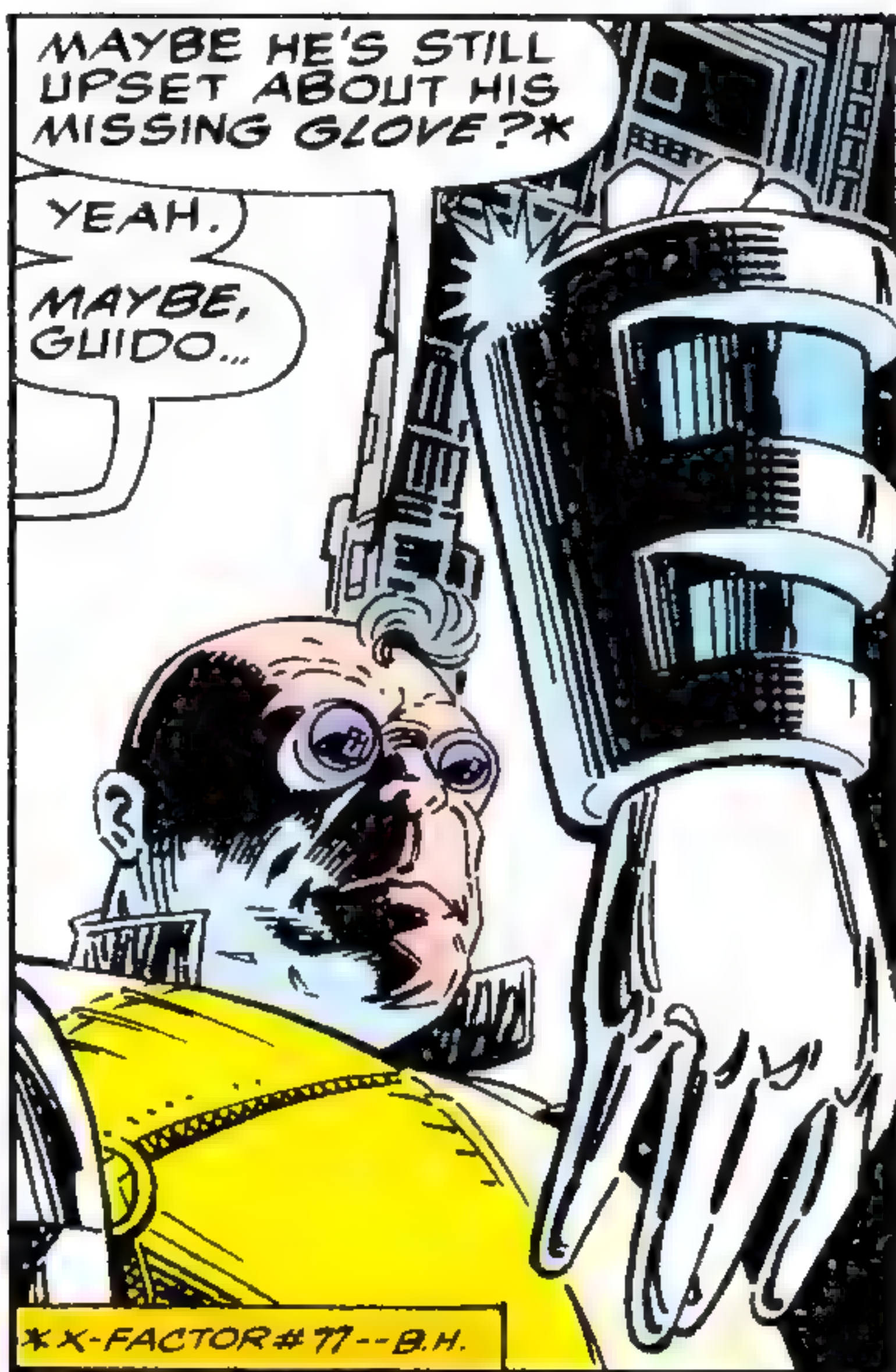
WHY HAVE
YOU
DONE THIS
TO ME?

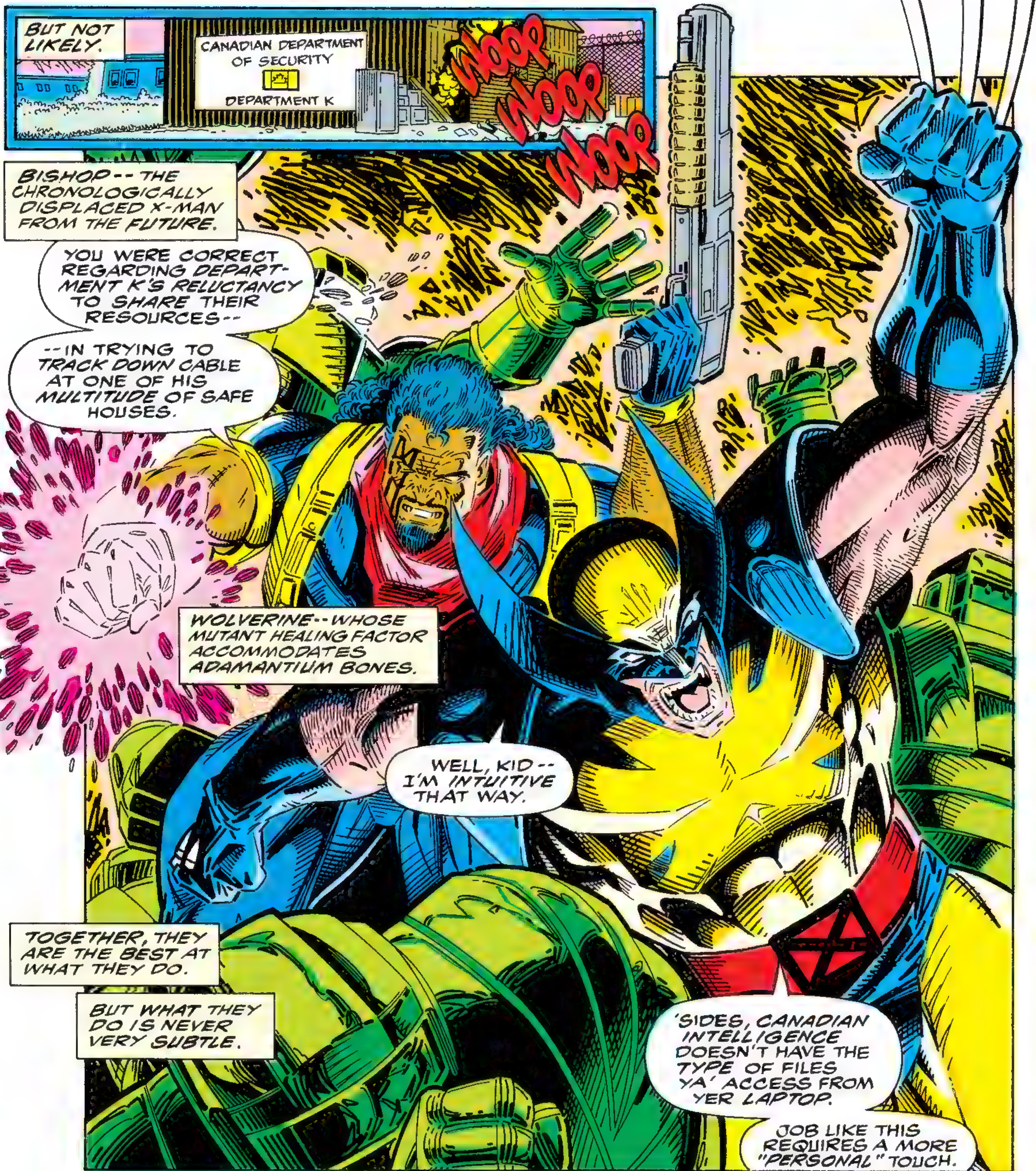
HOW
IRONIC.

I WAS
JUST ABOUT
TO ASK YOU--

--THE SAME
QUESTION.







BUT NOT LIKELY.

CANADIAN DEPARTMENT
OF SECURITY
DEPARTMENT K

whoop
whoop
whoop

BISHOP-- THE
CHRONOLOGICALLY
DISPLACED X-MAN
FROM THE FUTURE.

YOU WERE CORRECT
REGARDING DEPART-
MENT K'S RELUCTANCY
TO SHARE THEIR
RESOURCES--

--IN TRYING TO
TRACK DOWN CABLE
AT ONE OF HIS
MULTITUDE OF SAFE
HOUSES.

WOLVERINE-- WHOSE
MUTANT HEALING FACTOR
ACCOMMODATES
ADAMANTIUM BONES.

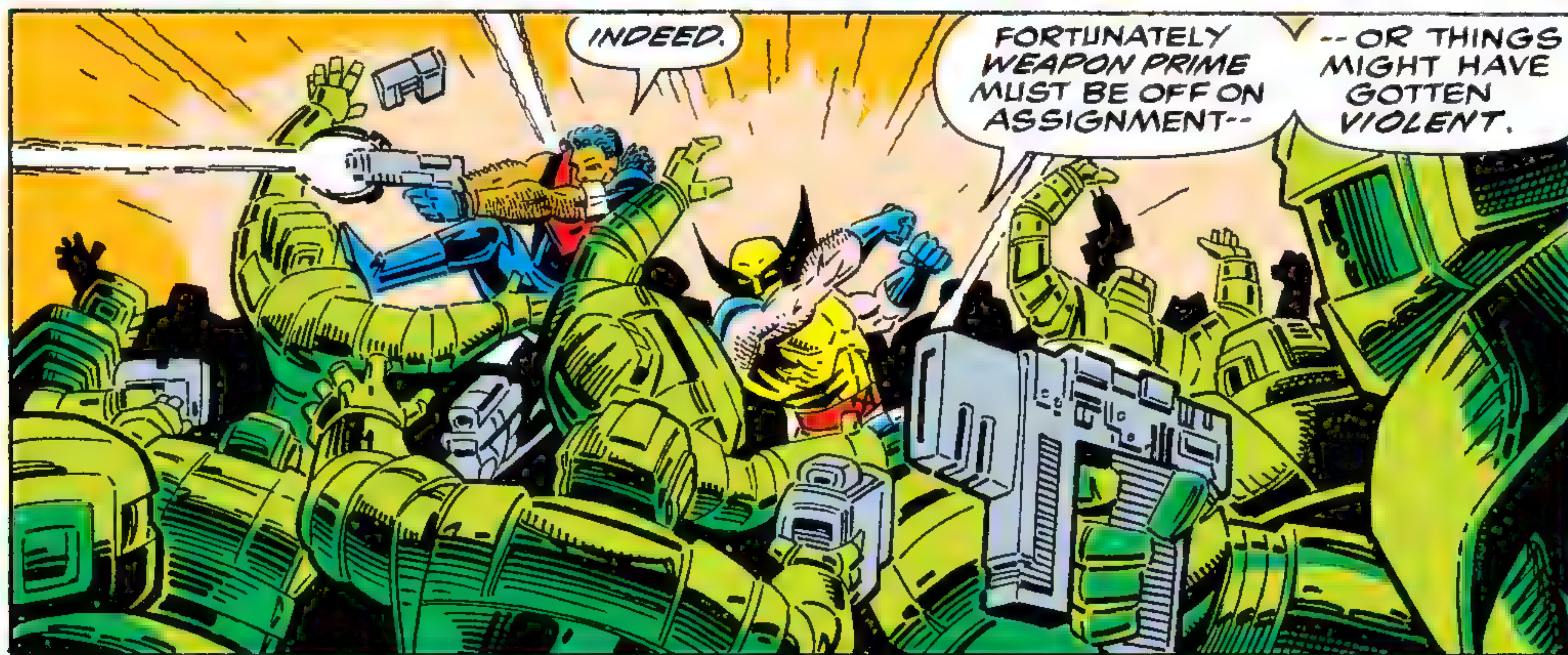
WELL, KID--
I'M INTUITIVE
THAT WAY.

TOGETHER, THEY
ARE THE BEST AT
WHAT THEY DO.

BUT WHAT THEY
DO IS NEVER
VERY SUBTLE.

'SIDES, CANADIAN
INTELLIGENCE
DOESN'T HAVE THE
TYPE OF FILES
YA' ACCESS FROM
YER LAPTOP.

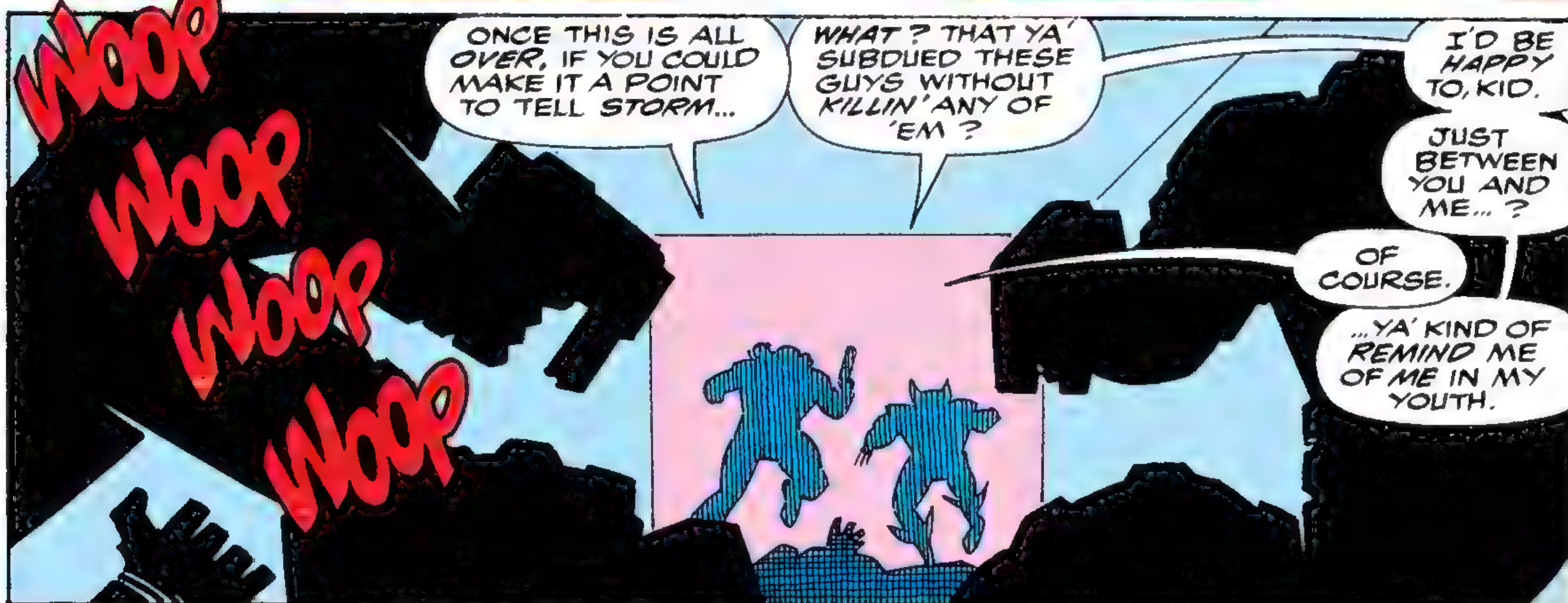
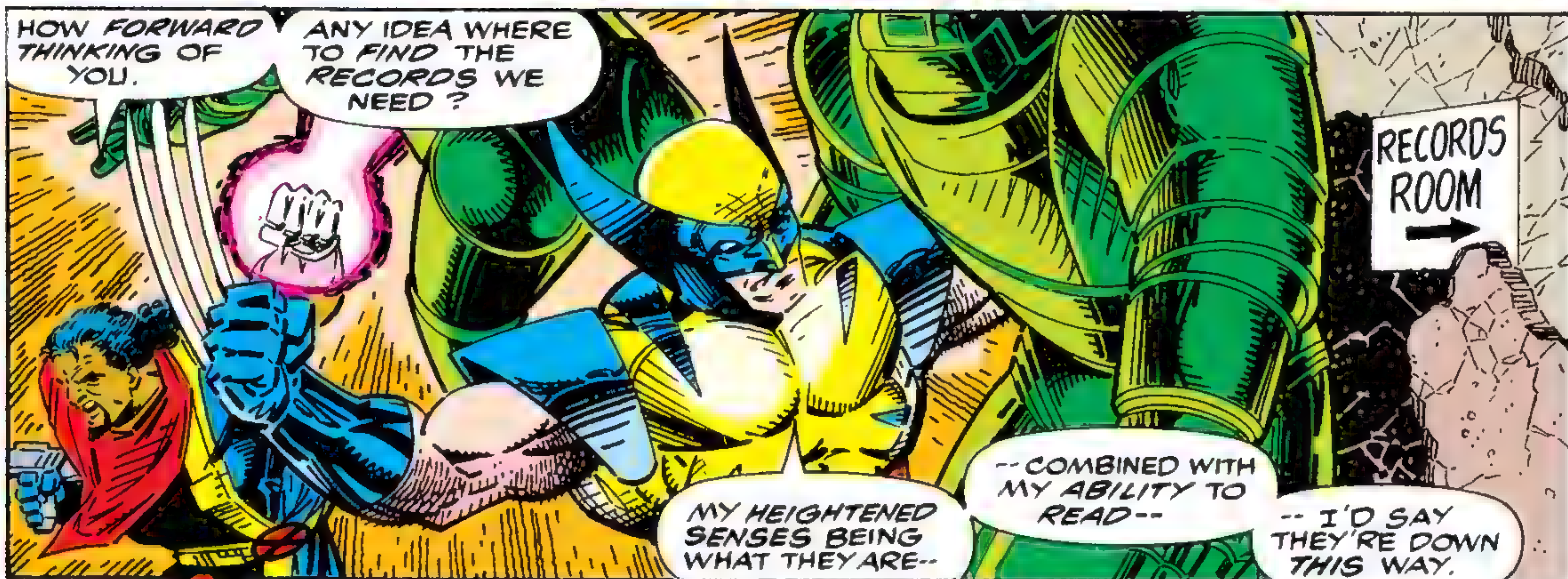
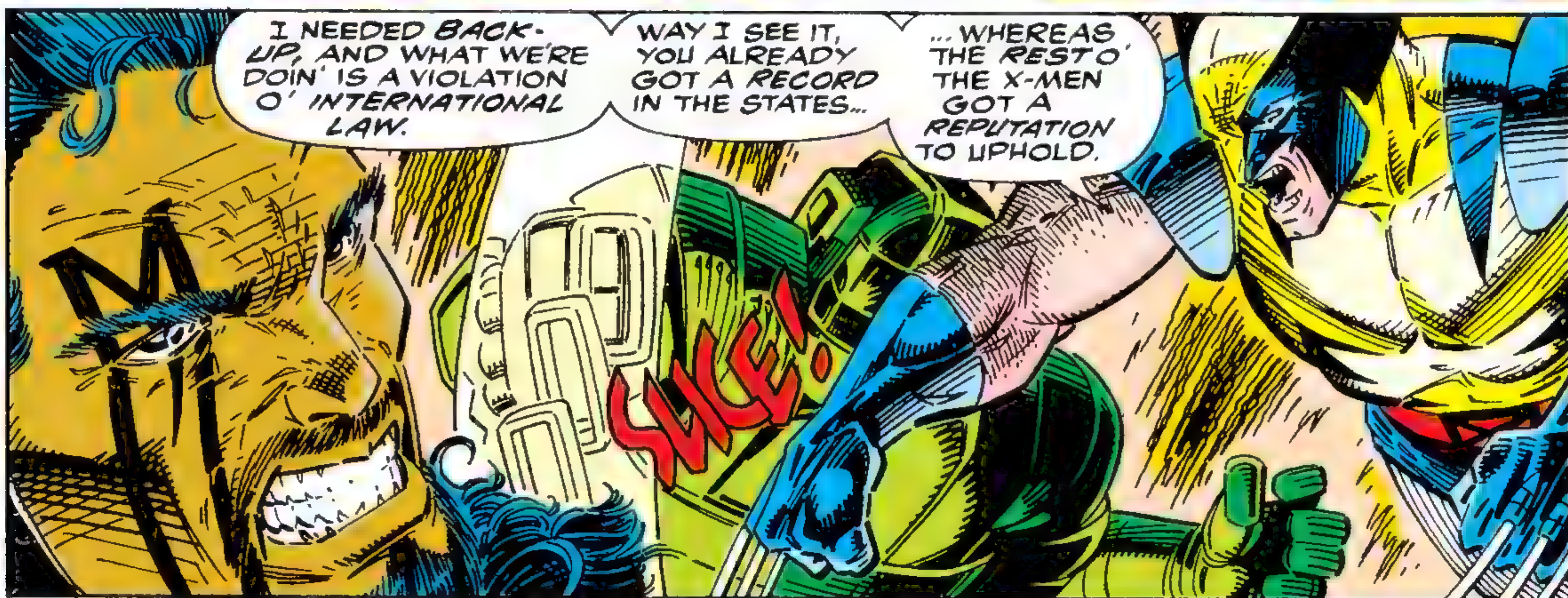
JOB LIKE THIS
REQUIRES A MORE
"PERSONAL" TOUCH.

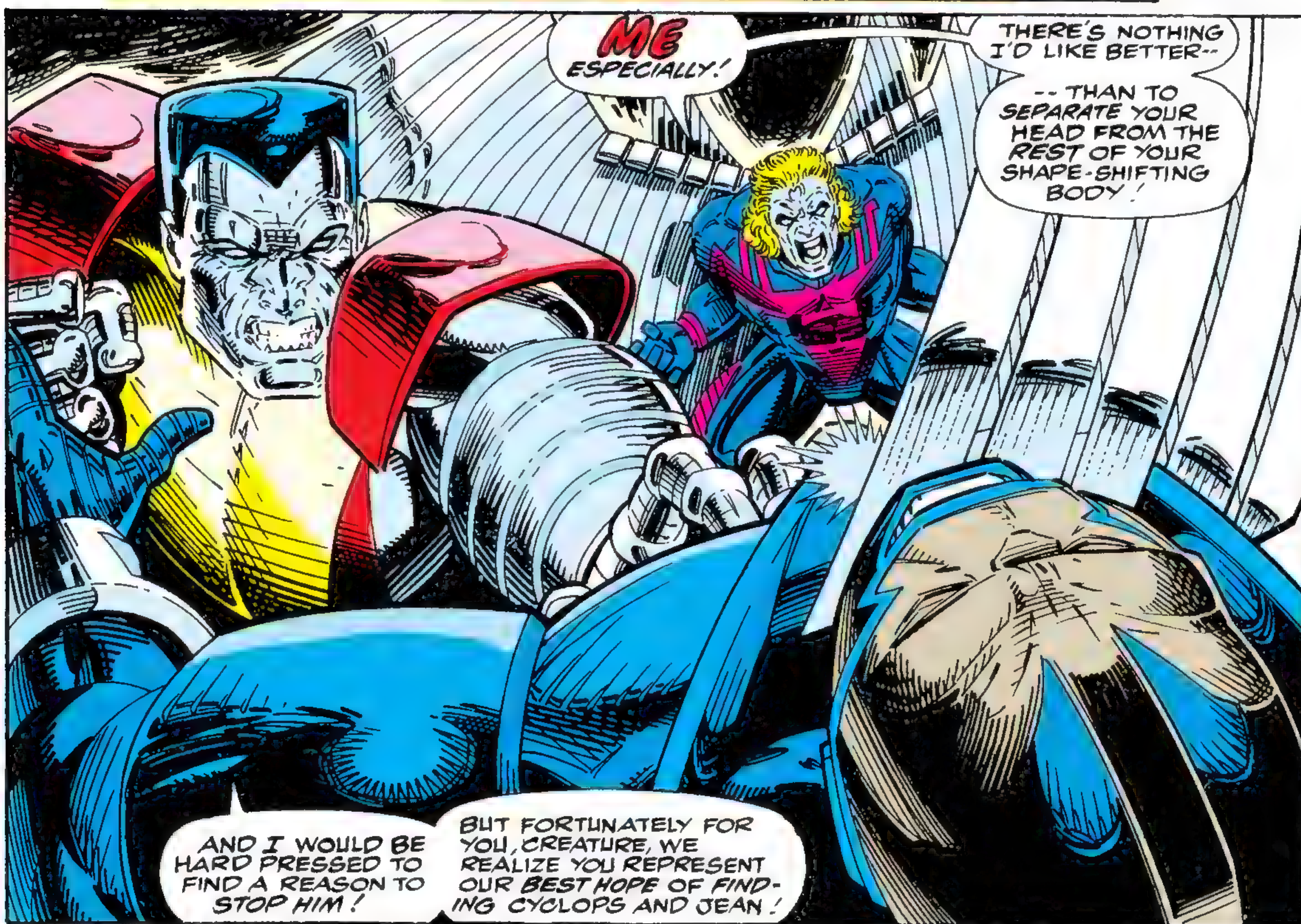
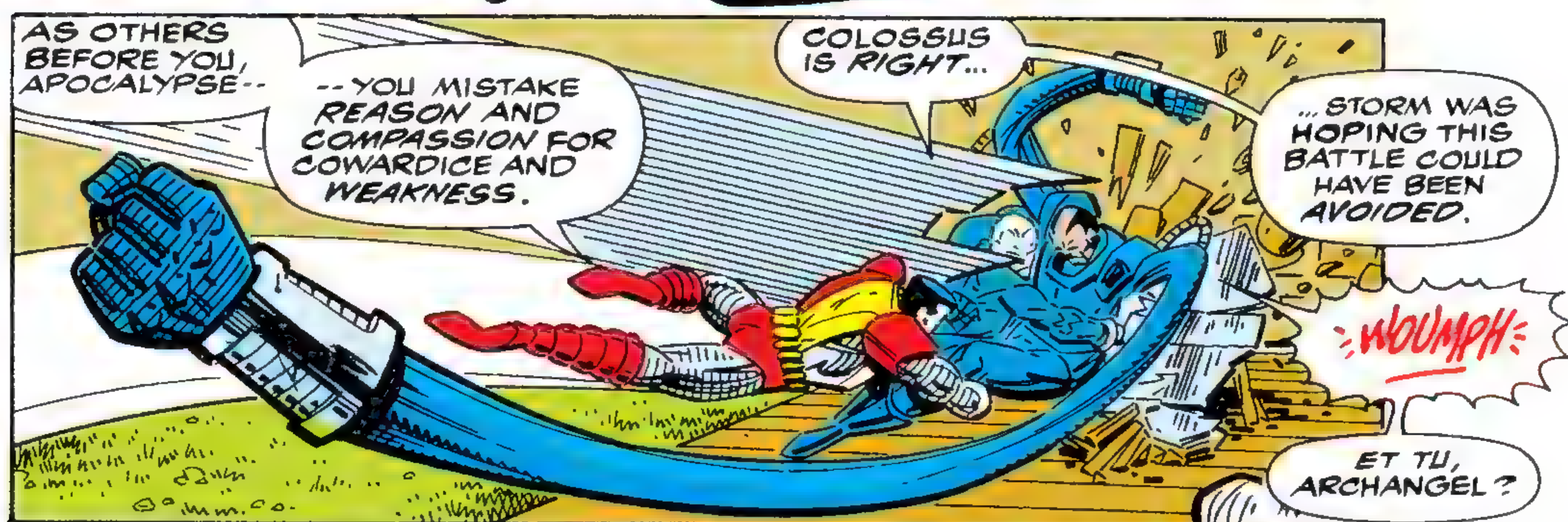
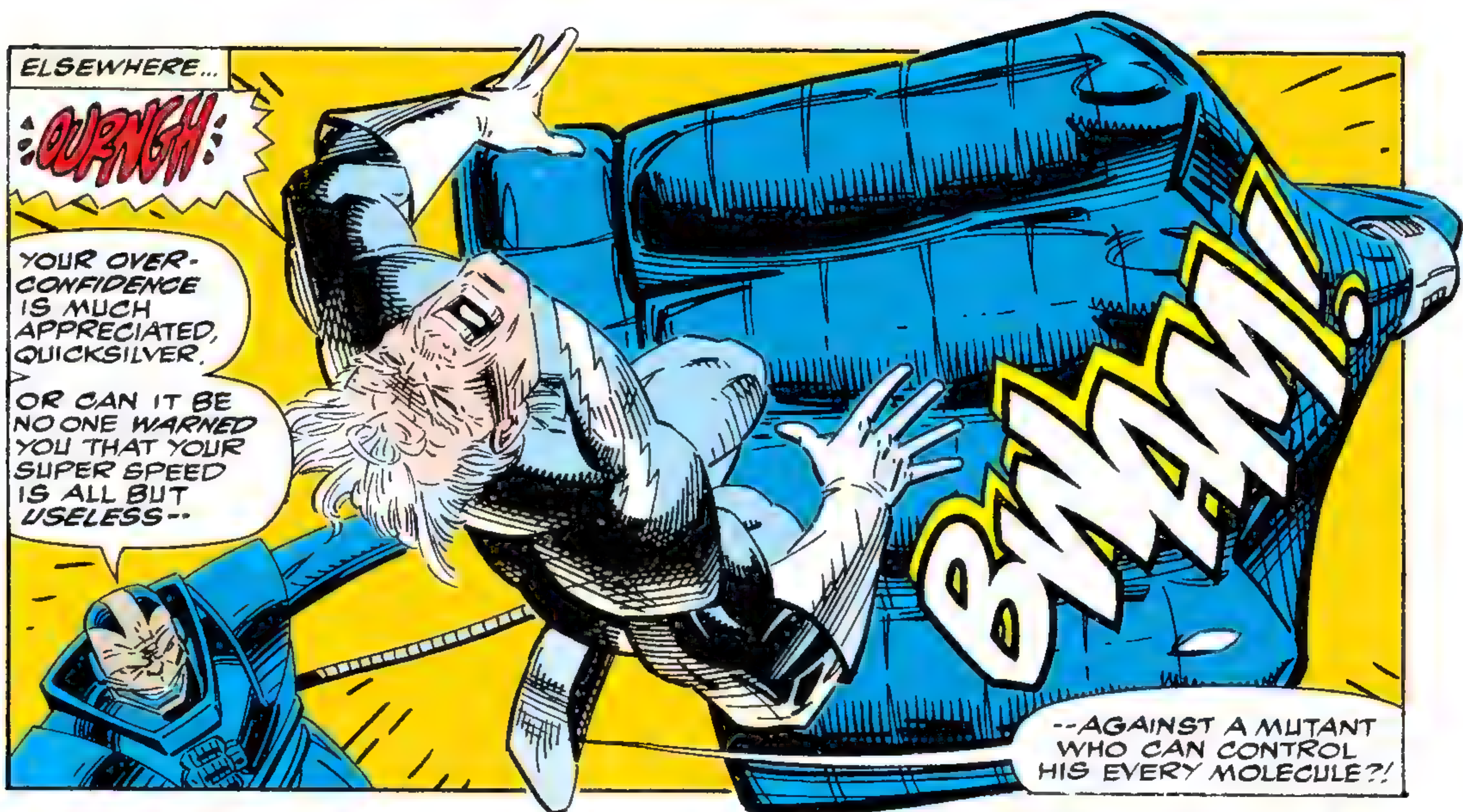


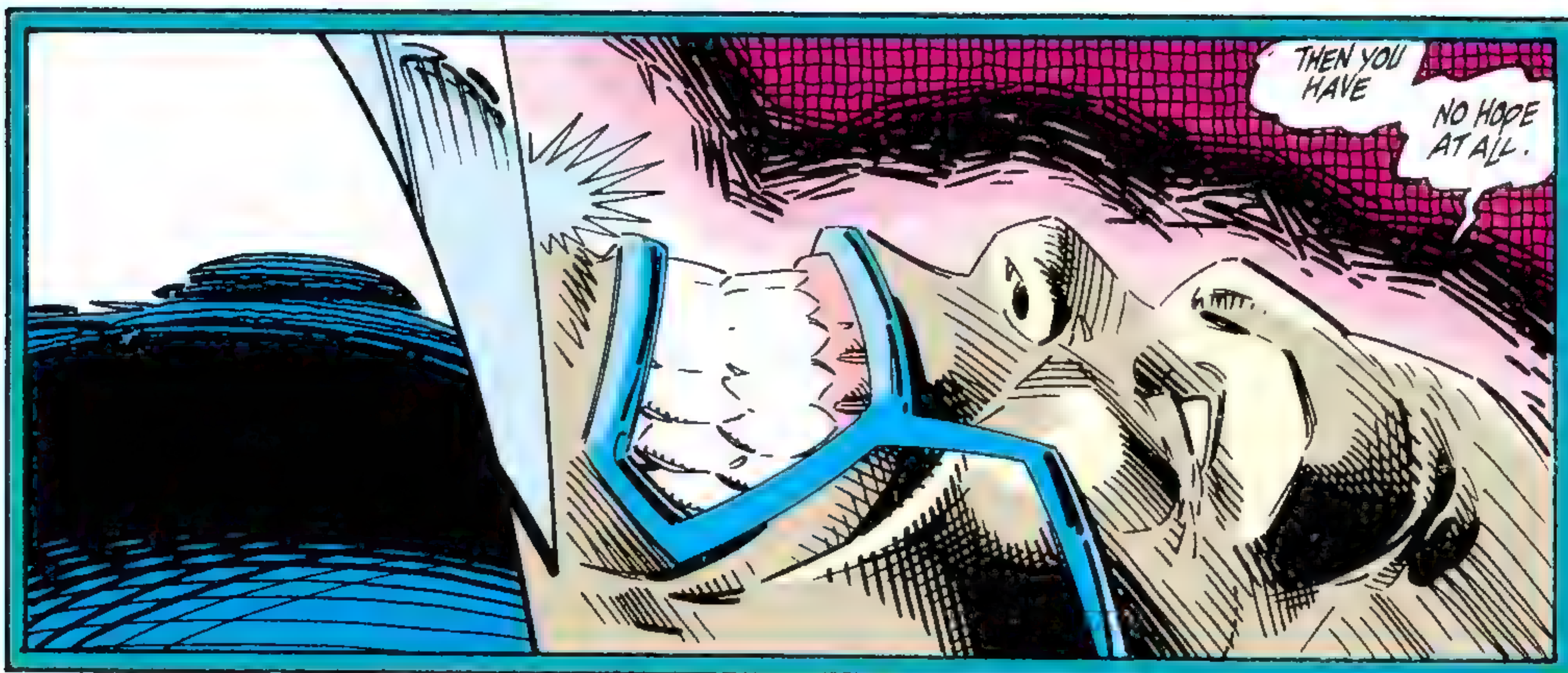
INDEED.

FORTUNATELY
WEAPON PRIME
MUST BE OFF ON
ASSIGNMENT--

-- OR THINGS
MIGHT HAVE
GOTTEN
VIOLENT.







THEN YOU
HAVE

NO HOPE
AT ALL.



FOR YOU SEE,
I DID NOT
RETURN "HOME"

OUT OF
SOME MIS-
GUIDED
SENTIMEN-
TALITY.

RATHER,
THIS
ESTATE
HOUSES...

SCHUNK



THOUGH HE WOULD
NEVER ADMIT IT TO
ANOTHER LIVING
BEING --

...POWER!

ZKRAZZ

-- THERE IS VERY LITTLE
APOCALYPSE UNDER-
STANDS ABOUT THE ALIEN
TECHNOLOGY AT HIS
DISPOSAL...

...TECHNOLOGY INCORPORATED
INTO THE VERY STRUCTURE OF
SAFEHOUSES LIKE THIS
THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

BUT, WHAT HE DOES
COMPREHEND, HOW-
EVER --

-- PROVES TO BE
MORE THAN
ENOUGH.

SIX X-MEN IN
UNDER SIXTY
SECONDS... ?

TO THINK I
FELT I'D
PAST MY
PRIME SEVERAL
HUNDRED
YEARS AGO.

I **SHOULD**
TAKE THIS
OPPORTUNITY
TO SLAY THEM--

-- TO CULL
THE CHAFF
FROM THE
WHEAT...

... BUT TO
SLAUGHTER AN
UNCONSCIOUS
FOE IS SO--

--UNSEEMLY.

THE TRUTH OF THE
MATTER IS, THE
KINETIC TRANS-
FERENCE I RE-
CEIVED IS LIMITED,
AT MOST.

IT WOULD
BE BEST...

... IF I AM
ELSEWHERE
WHEN THEY
AWAKE.

THEIR WORDS
AND DEEDS SUGGEST
SOMEONE ELSE IS
ORCHESTRATING
OUR EVERY ENCOUNTER.

UNTIL I CAN
DISCERN THE
IDENTITY OF
THE
TORMENTOR.

--AND PUT AN
END TO HIS
MACHINATIONS...

... I WOULD DO WELL
TO CONSERVE MY
RESOURCES FOR THE
BATTLE TO COME.

AND A
CONTINENT
AWAY...

... AT XAVIER'S
SCHOOL FOR
GIFTED YOUNG-
STERS.

Y'ALL
SENT FOR
ME?

YOU MIGHT
EVEN
BELIEVE THAT,
HOMME.

(ME...?)

GAMBLING MAN
DAT I BE-- I'M
WILLING TO BET
YOU GOT MORE
INFORMATION
FLOATING 'ROUND
IN DAT HEAD O'
YOURS 'DAN YOU
KNOW.

JUST A MATTER
O' HOW WE GONNA
PRY IT OUT.

COMPRENEZ-
VOUS?

VERY SUBTLE,
GAMBIT.

JUST LIKE WE
REHEARSED. MAYBE
NEXT TIME YOU
COULD HIT HIM OVER
THE HEAD WITH A
BRICK!

YES,
SAM.

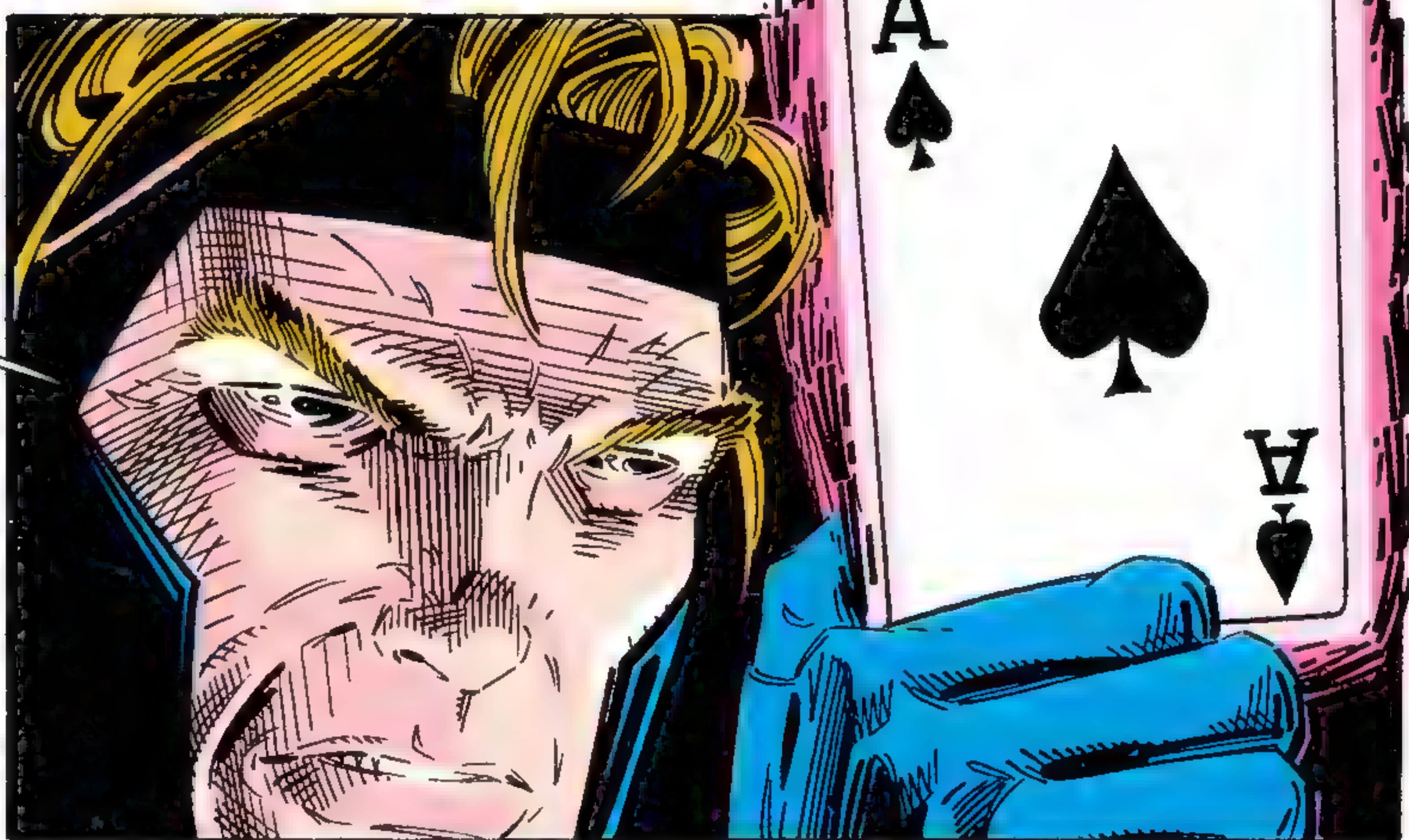
COME IN,
MAKE
YOURSELF--

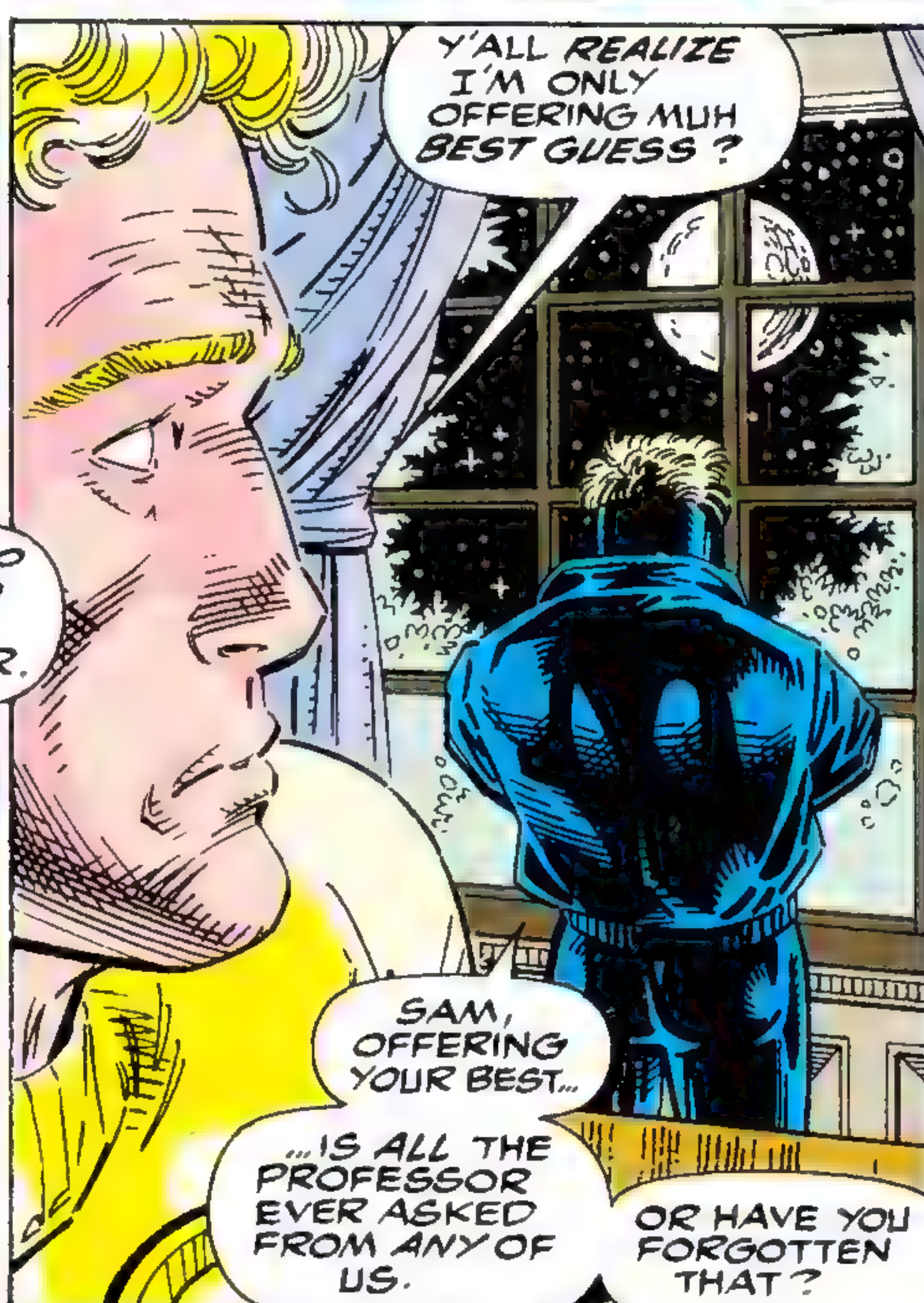
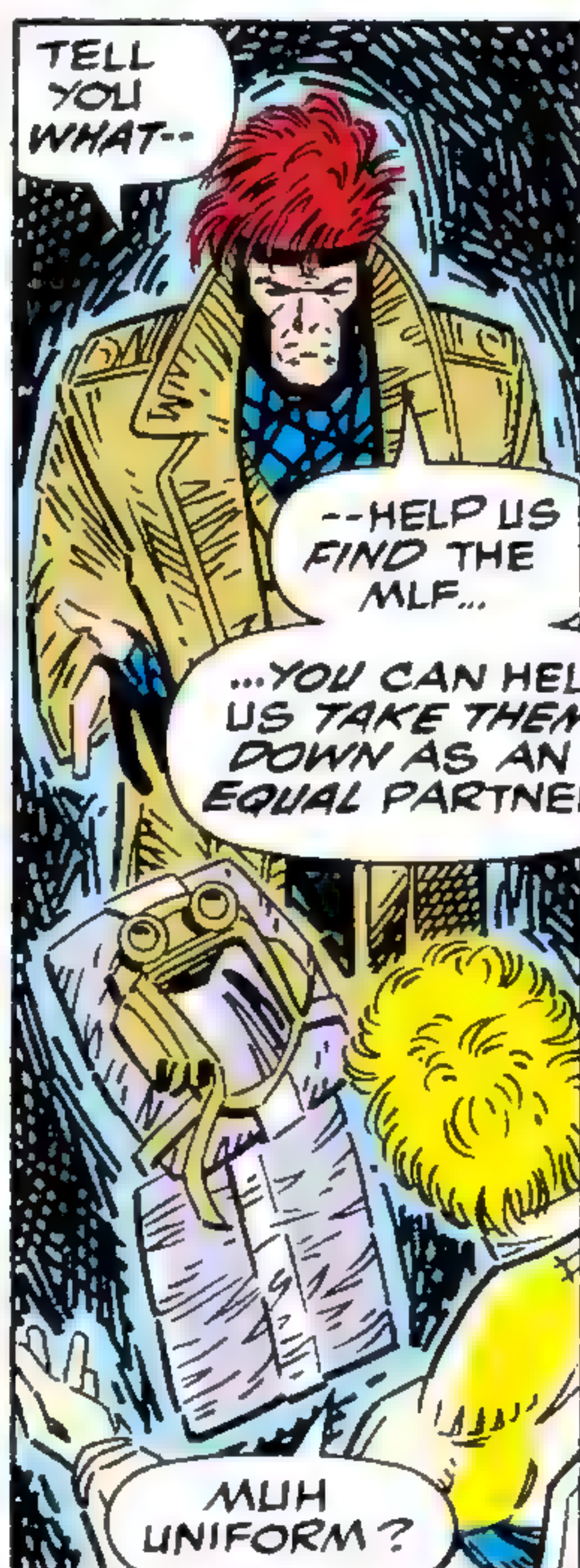
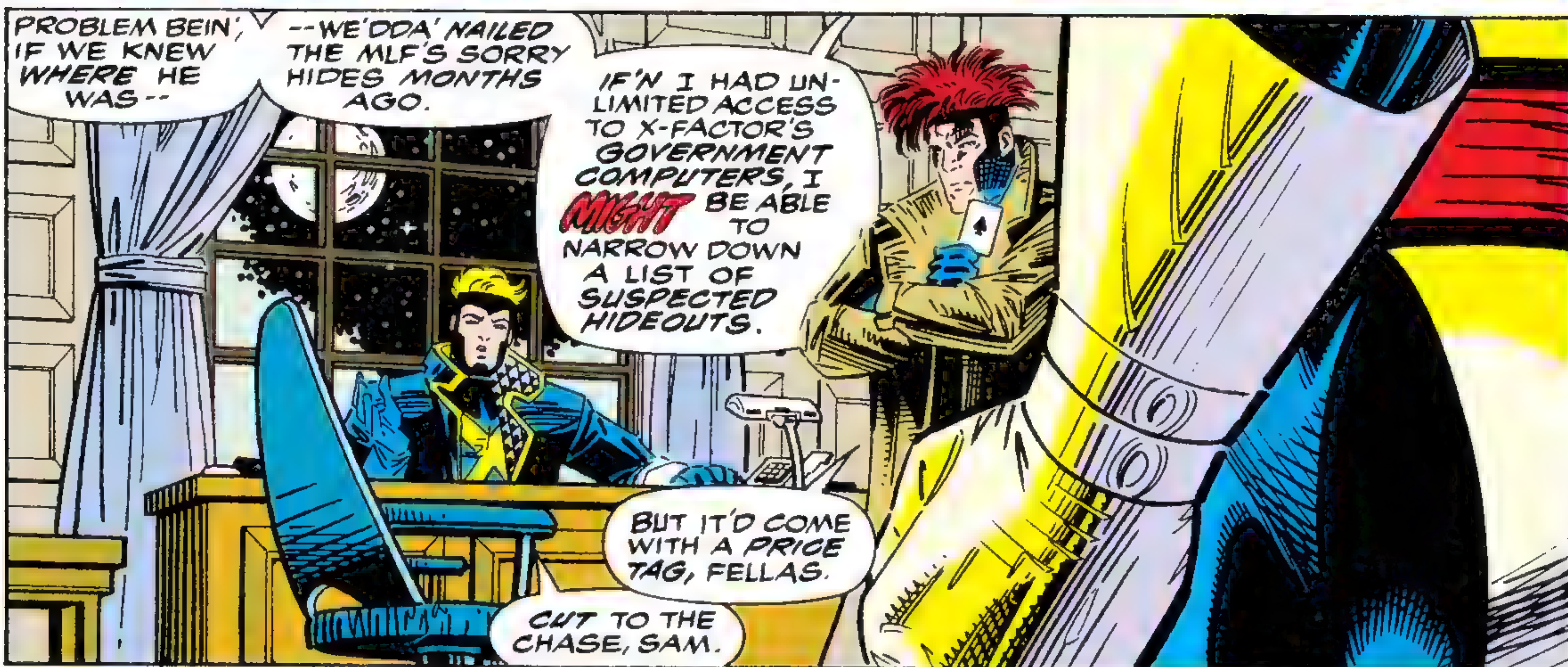
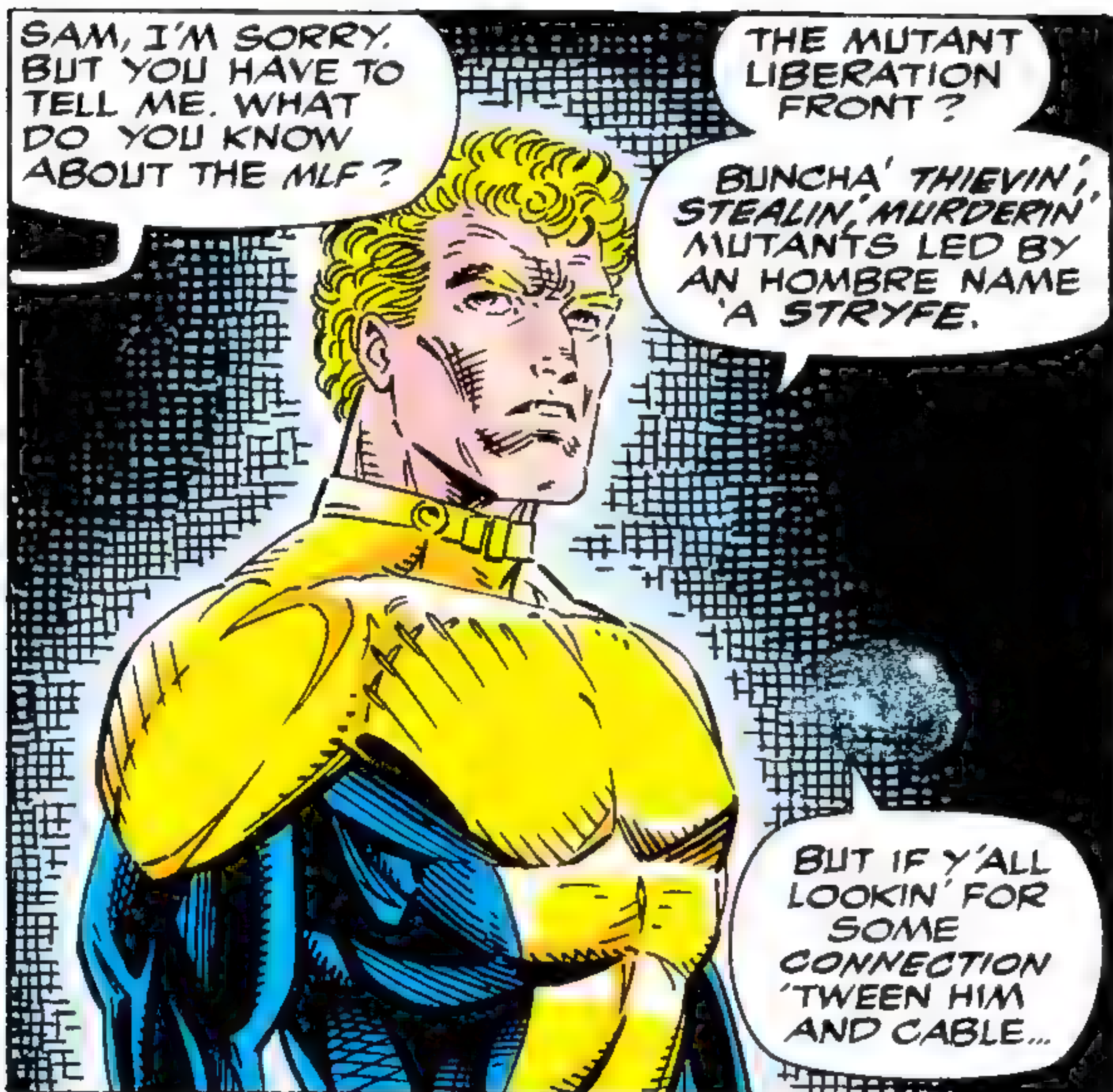
"--COMFORTABLE?"
NOT LIKELY, ALEX.

NOT WITH THE
REST O' MY TEAM
LOCKED-UP LIKE
A BUNCH O'
CRIMINALS...

... WHILE YOU AN'
GAMBIT HERE ATTEMPT
T'DIVIDE AND CONQUER
X-FORCE BY PROMPTIN'
ME T'DROP A DIME
ON CABLE.

PROBLEM BEIN',
AH ALREADY
TOLDJA' WHAT
AH KNOW.





CANADA...

AHHHH,
DEPARTMENT
K--

-- I SPEND
ANY MORE
TIME HERE,
I MIGHT
JUST AS
WELL RENT
OUT A
ROOM.*

Probably not a viable alternative
to your current housing arrange-
ment, Nathan.

MAKE YOURSELF
USEFUL, PROFESSOR--
AND CONFIRM THAT
PIERCING KLAXON
IS A PARAMETER
BREACH.

Affirmative.

It seems this complex
was under assault
prior to your arrival.

*SEE THE CABLE LIMITED SERIES,
STILL ON SALE, FOR DETAILS. --B.H.

PERFECT.

THAT MEANS
WHILE K SECURITY
IS KNEE-DEEP IN
ONE FIRE FIGHT
OR THE OTHER --

-- I CAN
SLINK
IN --

-- STEAL THE
NECESSARY FILES
I NEED TO
TRACK DOWN STRYFE
AND THE MLF --

... AND BODYSLIDE
HOME BEFORE
ANYONE HAS A
CLUE.

NICE TO SEE ALL
MY CLEAN LIVING IS
FINALLY PAYING
OFF --

WPA BROOM



--AND SOMETHING
IS WORKING OUT
THE WAY I PLANNED
IT.
FOR
ONCE.

Not according to my
sensors, Nathan.

WOOP
WOOP
WOOP
WOOP
WOOP

YOU?!!

IT'S GOING
TO BE ONE
OF THOSE
DAYS.

PETERSON
-
AUSTIN

WOOP
WOOP
WOOP

The
**-CUTIONER'S
GONE**
CONTINUES IN THE
PAGES OF
X-FACTOR #85!
YOU BRING THE AMMO
WE'LL SUPPLY
THE REST!

MARVEL
COMICS

X-CUTIONER'S SONG

PART 6

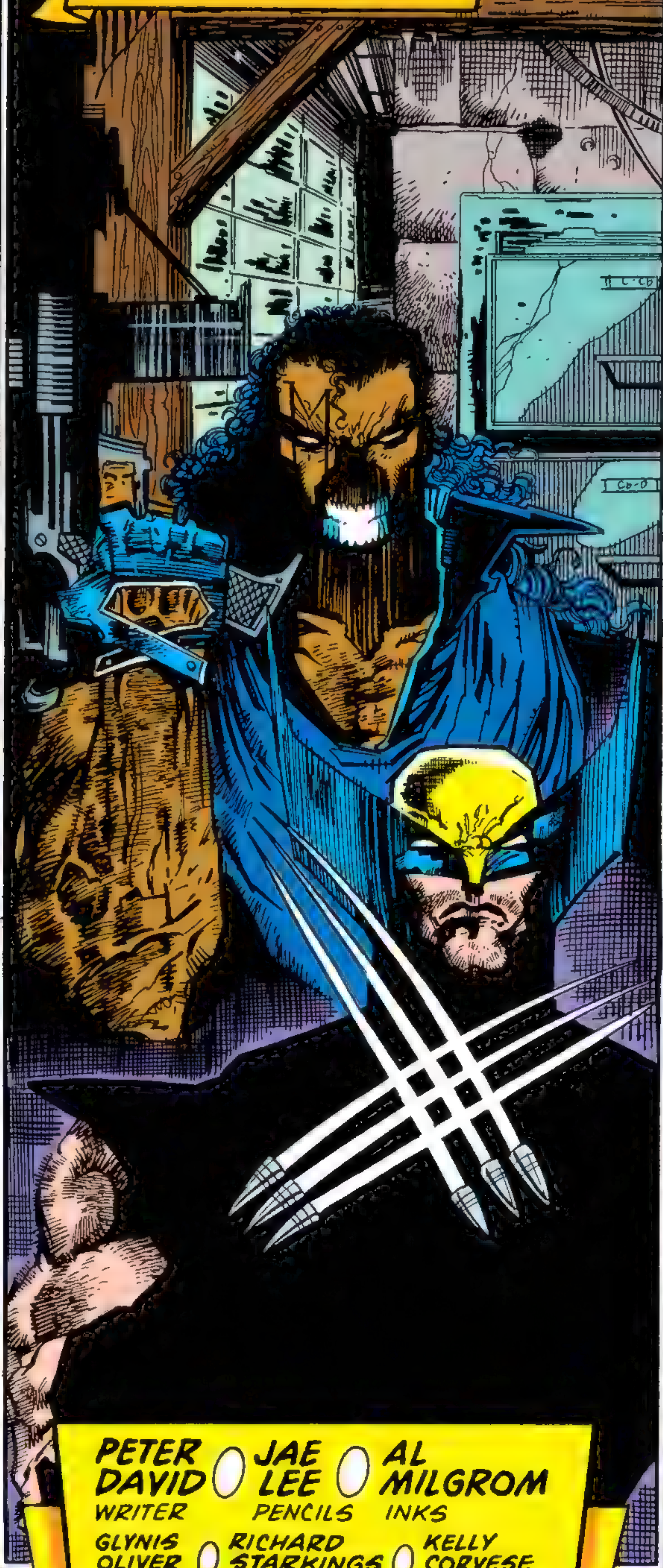
X FACTOR

\$1.50 US
\$1.80 CAN
85
DEC
UK £1.00

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY



THE RECORDS ROOM OF DEPARTMENT K, WHERE A CHAOTIC INFORMATION-GATHERING EXPEDITION BY WOLVERINE AND BISHOP...



PETER DAVID ○ **JAE LEE** ○ **AL MILGROM**
WRITER PENCILS INKS

GLYNIS OLIVER ○ **RICHARD STARKINGS** ○ **KELLY CORVESE**
COLORS LETTERS EDITOR

BOB HARRAS ○ **TOM DEFALCO**
GROUP EDITOR EDITOR IN CHIEF

... AS PART OF THEIR ENDEAVORS TO TRACK DOWN CHARLES XAVIER'S SUSPECTED ASSAILANT, CABLE...



... HAS JUST EXPERIENCED A NEW TWIST.



THIS IS CERTAINLY A SITUATION THAT'S RIFE WITH POSSIBILITIES.

I DON'T IMAGINE THAT ONE OF THOSE POSSIBILITIES IS THAT YOU GIVE ME FIVE MINUTES ALONE IN THIS FILE ROOM, AND THEN PERMIT ME TO GO ON MY WAY UN-MOLESTED...

... PERHAPS?

APOCALYPSE ESCAPED FROM A BATTLE WITH THE X-MEN. VAL COOPER DISCOVERED THAT STRYFE MAY BE THE MASTERMIND BEHIND IT ALL. CANNONBALL ACCEPTED AN OFFER OF ALLIANCE. WOLVERINE AND BISHOP JOURNEYED TO DEPT. K TO FIND CABLE WAITING FOR THEM.

X-CUTIONER'S SONG
CONTINUES!

MURDERER!

BUCHOOOM

STAN LEE PRESENTS:

SNIKTS AND BONES

I'LL TAKE THAT AS A "NO."

**UNNH
NNH
NNH**

YOU AIN'T GONNA TAKE ME DOWN BY TOSSING A FILE CABINET.

IT WAS WORTH A TRY, LOGAN.

NO MORE MESSIN' AROUND, CABLE. I WANT ANSWERS!

OOOF FF!

I ONLY NEED YOUR MOUTH INTACT FOR THAT.

SO THE NUMBER OF LIMBS YOU'LL KEEP WHILE YOU GIVE ME THOSE ANSWERS...

...IS STRICTLY UP TO YOU!

DUST BOWL,
ARKANSAS...

'SCUSE
ME? 'SCUSE
ME? THANKS.
'PRECIATE
IT.

I STILL
DO NOT LIKE
THIS... THIS
OPEN
APPROACH,
HAVOK.

BEING OVERT THROWS
OFF PEOPLE WHO ARE
EXPECTING COVERT,
STORM. JUST TRUST
ME ON THIS.

'SCUSE ME, Y'ALL.
MY NAME'S
CANNONBALL... AND
WE HERE ARE REP-
RESENTING THREE
MUTANT
GROUPS.

NOW, ALL
OUR REFERENCIN',
BASED ON PAST
BATTLES COMBINED
WITH GOVERNMENT
DATA BASES...
INDICATES THAT THE
**MUTANT LIBERATION
FRONT** HAS THEIR
MAIN HANGOUT
HEREABOUTS.

FURTHER,
WE HAVE
REASON TO
BELIEVE
THAT THEY
AND THEIR
LEADER,
STRYFE,
ATTEMPTED
TO BLOW
AWAY
CHARLES
XAVIER.

SO I'D
LIKE TO KNOW IF
Y'ALL HAVE SEEN
THE MLF ANY-
WHERE AROUND?

ALLLEXXX!

HOW
ABOUT
THAT?
AFTER
NINE
POSSIBLE
TOWNS,
FINALLY
WE GOT A
NIBBLE.

ALL
RIGHT! YOU'RE
ALL UNDER
ARREST!

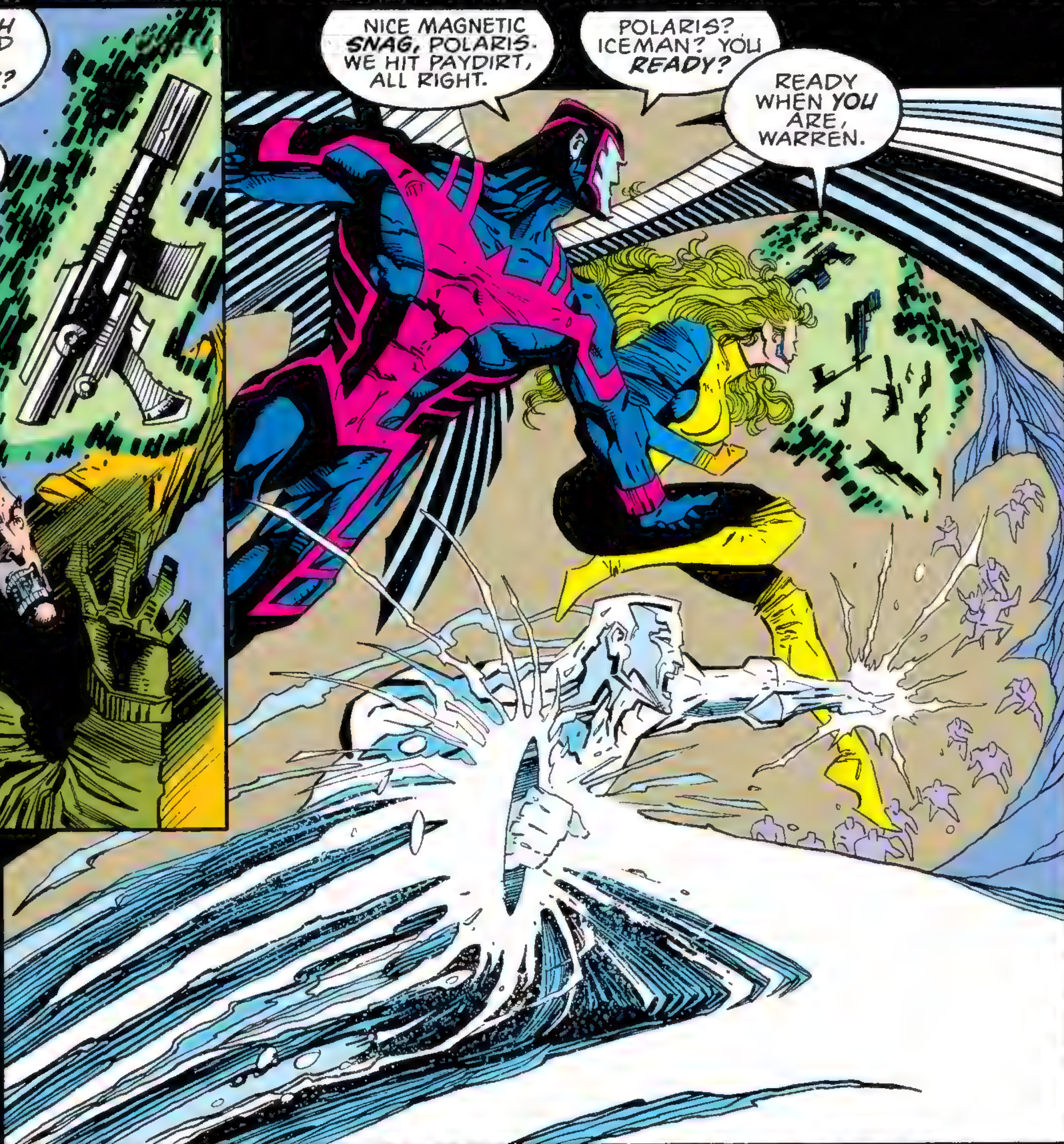
OH YEAH
YOU AND
WHAT
ARMY?

HEY!

NICE MAGNETIC
SNAG, POLARIS.
WE HIT PAYDIRT,
ALL RIGHT.

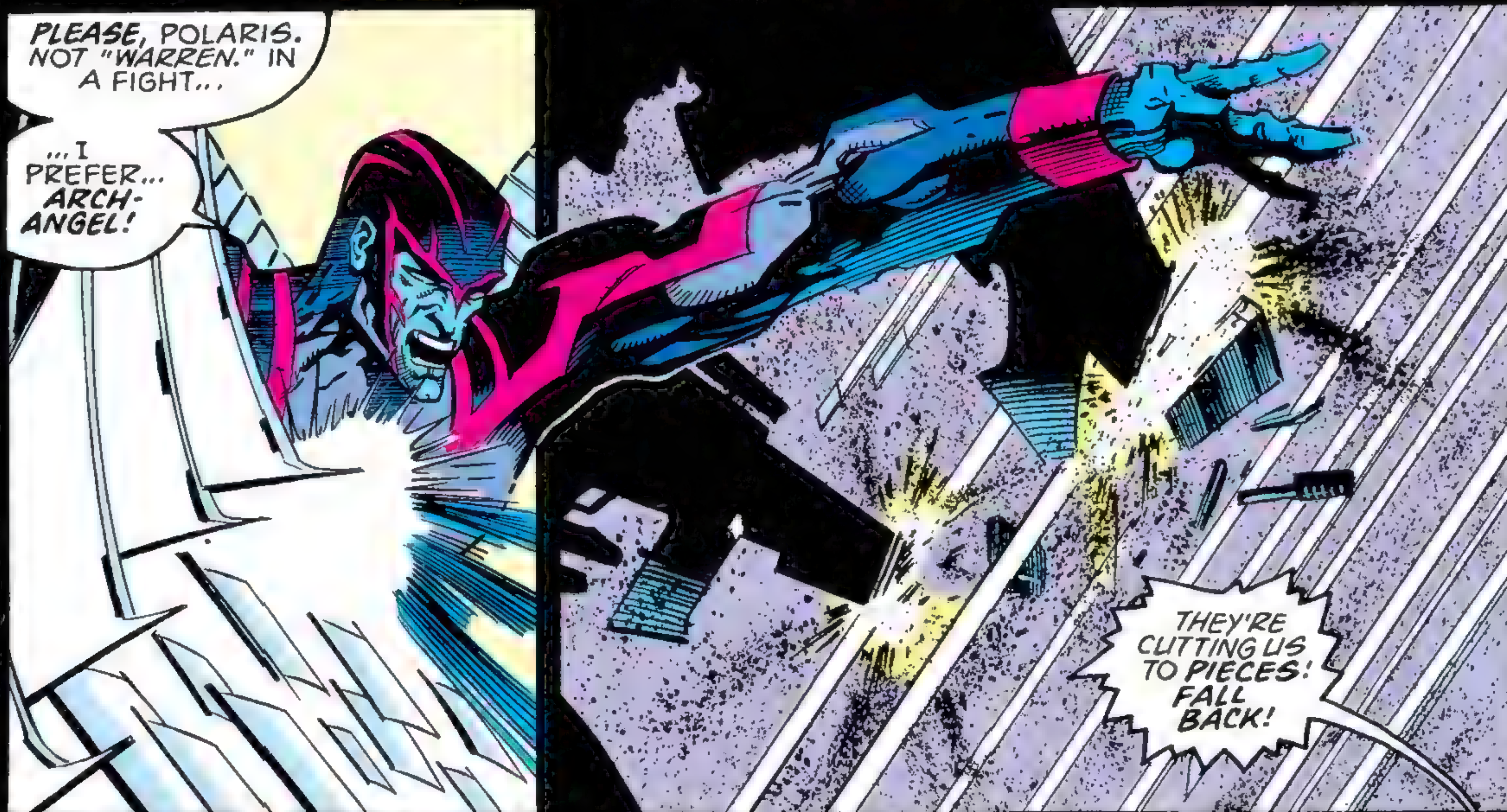
POLARIS?
ICEMAN? YOU
READY?

READY
WHEN YOU
ARE,
WARREN.



PLEASE, POLARIS.
NOT "WARREN." IN
A FIGHT...

...I
PREFER...
ARCH-
ANGEL!



THEY'RE
CUTTING US
TO PIECES!
FALL
BACK!

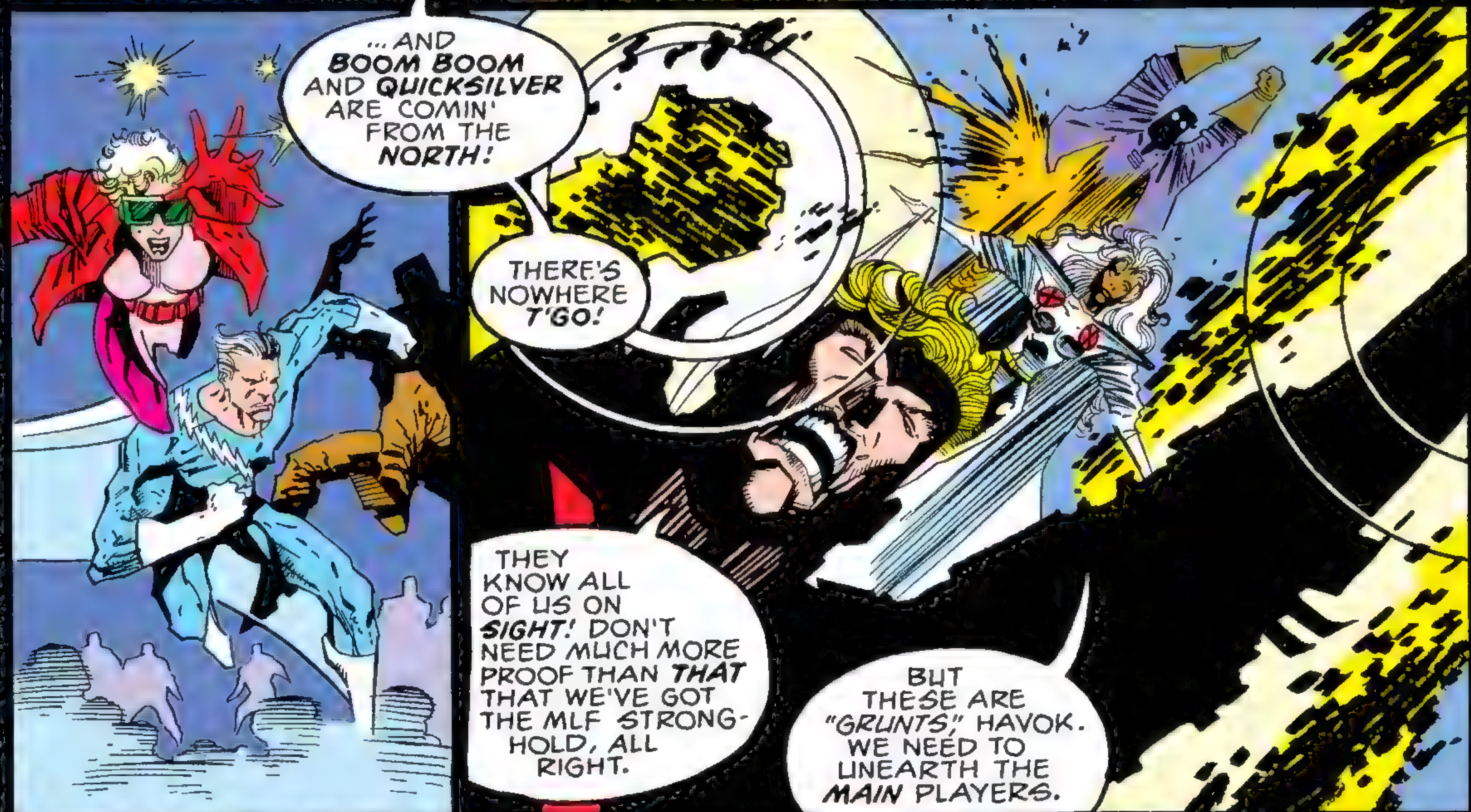


FALL BACK?!

WHICH WAY?!

THEY'RE COMING OUTTA THE WOOD-WORK!

ROGUE, GAMBIT AND PSYLOCKE ARE ATTACKIN' FROM THE EAST...

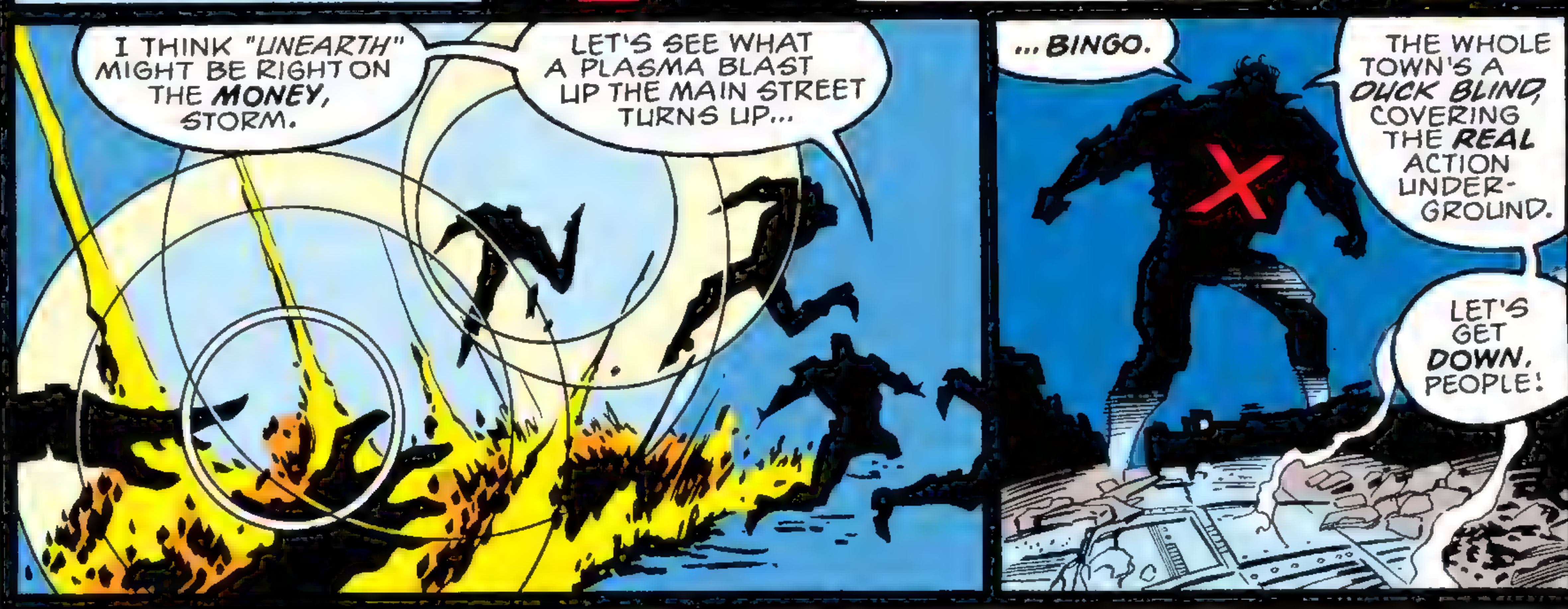


... AND BOOM BOOM AND QUICKSILVER ARE COMIN' FROM THE NORTH!

THERE'S NOWHERE T'GO!

THEY KNOW ALL OF US ON *SIGHT*! DON'T NEED MUCH MORE PROOF THAN *THAT* THAT WE'VE GOT THE MLF STRONG-HOLD, ALL RIGHT.

BUT THESE ARE "GRUNTS," HAVOK. WE NEED TO LINEARTH THE MAIN PLAYERS.



I THINK "LINEARTH" MIGHT BE RIGHT ON THE *MONEY*, STORM.

LET'S SEE WHAT A PLASMA BLAST UP THE MAIN STREET TURNS UP...

... BINGO.

THE WHOLE TOWN'S A DUCK BLIND, COVERING THE REAL ACTION UNDER-GROUND.

LET'S GET DOWN, PEOPLE!

ONE OF
CABLE'S
SAFE-
HOUSES,
IN SWIT-
ZERLAND.

THEN AGAIN, WITH
ONE SUCH AS
APOCALYPSE
INVOLVED... WHAT
HOUSE IS TRULY
SAFE?

THIS
TECHNOLOGY...
WHICH
PERVADES EVERY
CORNER OF
CABLE'S LITTLE
HIDEY-
HOLE ...

DERIVED
FROM ME!
FROM MY
TECHNOLOGY!
MY WORK!

IT'S UNMISTAKABLE!
BUT FROM WHERE WOULD
CABLE HAVE GARNERED
SUCH KNOWLEDGE?

THE ONLY
PEOPLE WHO COULD
POSSIBLY HAVE BEEN
FAMILIAR ENOUGH
WITH THE WORKINGS
OF MY FORMER
SHIP ARE THE
MEMBERS OF
X-FACTOR...

... **CYCLOPS**
AND HIS
ILK.

NONE
OF **THEM**
WOULD CO-
OPERATE
WITH
CABLE.

COULD
ONE OF THEM
ACTUALLY...
BE CABLE?

BUT THAT'S
RIDICULOUS. HOW
COULD A MEMBER
OF X-FACTOR BE
CABLE? FOR THAT
MATTER, WHY
WOULD HE
CHOOSE TO...

OF
COURSE.

WHAT IF...
THERE WAS
NO CHOICE?

DEPARTMENT K...

NICE
TRY, CABLE.
BOTTOM
LINE IS...

...YOU
MOVE TOO
SLOW!

AND YOU
TALK TOO
MUCH.

RAGH

SO I'LL
MOVE
FASTER...

...YOU'LL
TALK LESS...

...THEN
WE'LL ALL
BE HAPPY.

OOOF



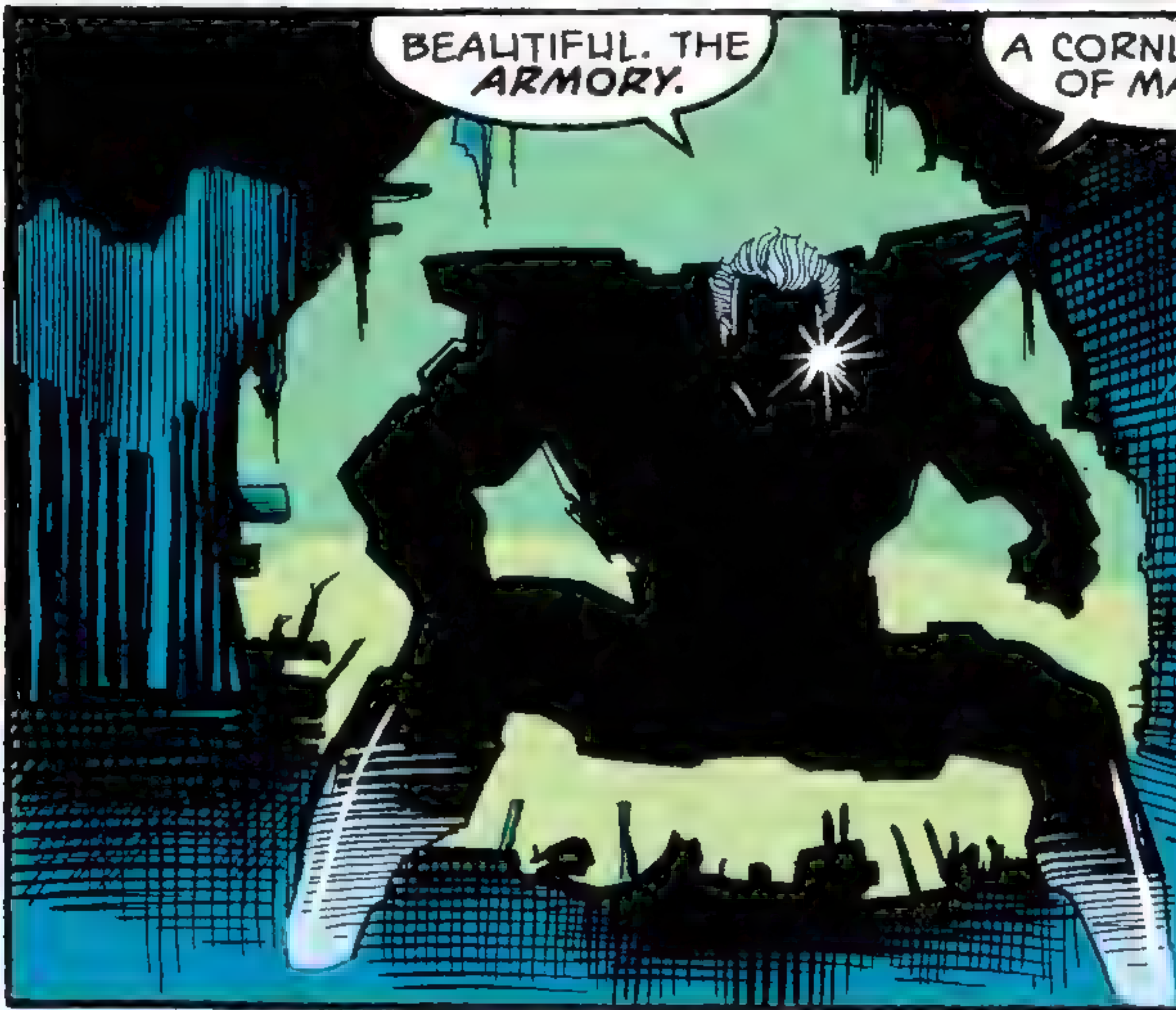
WOLVERINE!
ARE YOU
INJURED?

NOTHING
THAT NAILING
THAT JOKER
WOULDN'T
CURE.

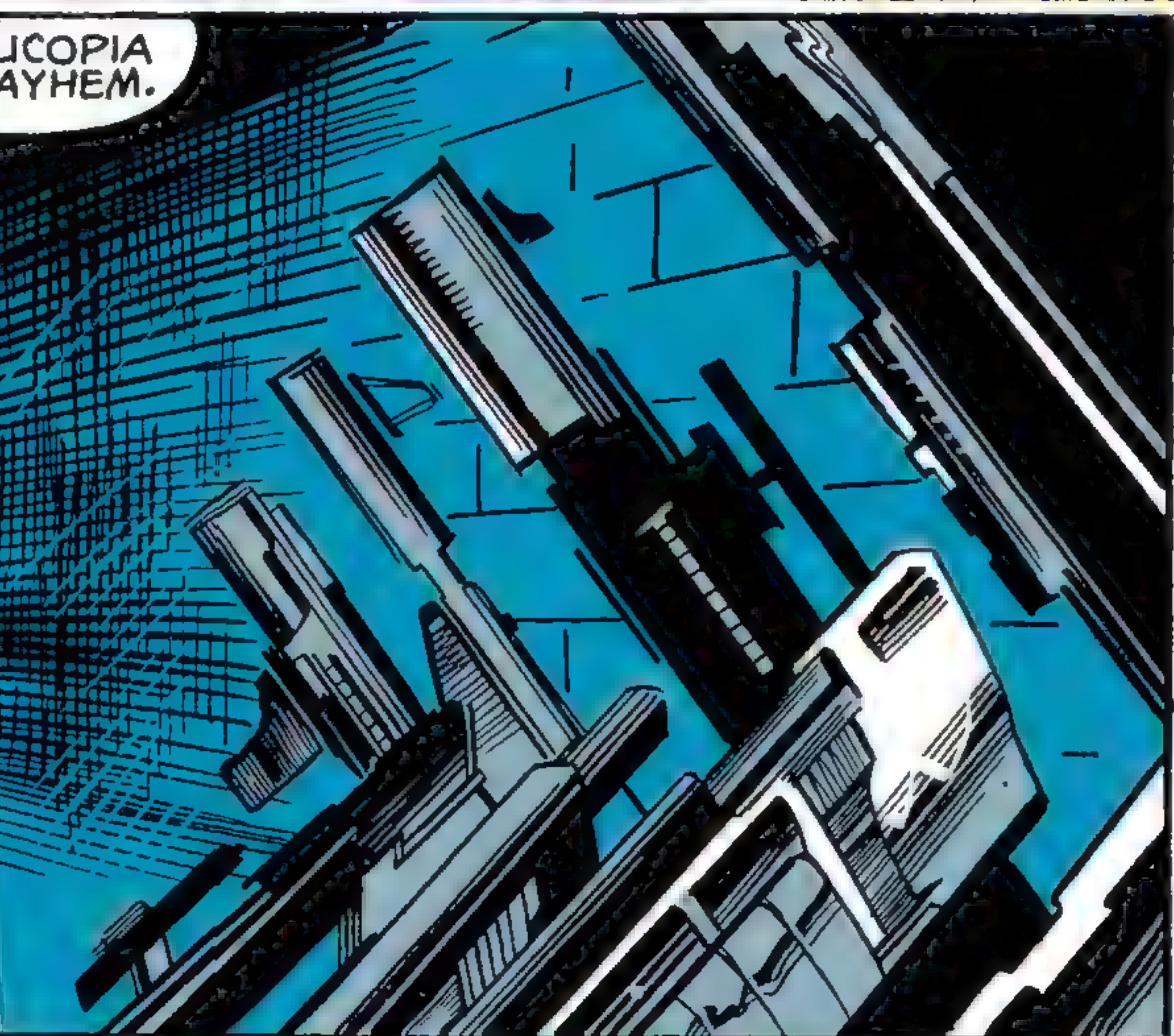
I WOULD
NOT WISH TO
INSULT YOU
BY ATTACKING
HIM, IF YOU
WISH TO
HANDLE HIM
ALONE.



OF ALL THE
WAYS YOU COULD
INSULT ME,
LENDING A HAND
AIN'T ONE
OF 'EM!



BEAUTIFUL. THE
ARMORY.



A CORNUCOPIA
OF MAYHEM.



CABLE! THERE
IS NOWHERE
FOR YOU TO
GO!

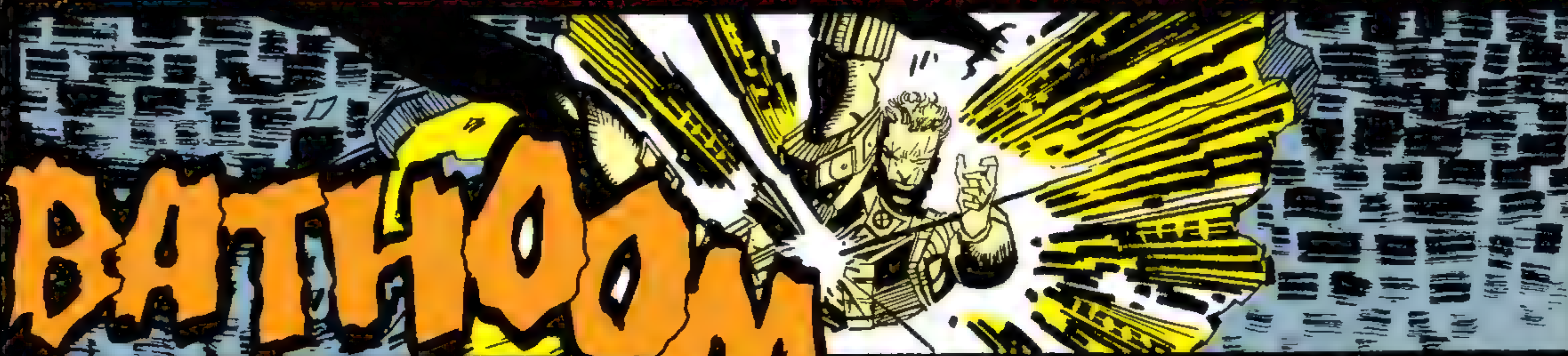


WHY *SHOULD* I GO
ANYWHERE, KID?
I LIKE IT
HERE!

I AM NOT
"KID." I AM
BISHOP.

AND IF YOU
KNEW ANYTHING
OF ME, THEN YOU
WOULD KNOW
THAT SHOOTING
ME WITH AN
ENERGY
WEAPON...

... IS THE
LAST THING
YOU WOULD
WANT TO
DO.



POINT...
TAKEN.

UNDERNEATH
DUST BOWL,
ARKANSAS...

WE HAVE THEM
ON MOTION SENSORS,
DRAGONESS.

OF COURSE THEY
ARE, YOU IDIOTS,
DON'T STAND AROUND
WAITING TO BE
SLAUGHTERED!
ATTACK!

ATTACK!

EXACTLY WHAT
WE HAD IN
MIND!

COULD Y'LEAVE
THE DRAGON LADY
TO ME, ICEMAN?
WE GOT US AN OLD
SCORE TO
SETTLE.

Ohhh, OKAY,
THE "TERRY AND THE
PIRATES" REJECT IS
ALL YOURS. BUT
ONLY BECAUSE YOU
ASKED SOOO NICELY.

HURRY
BACK. YOU
KNOW HOW I
WORRY.

IT DOESN'T
HAVE TO BE
LIKE THIS,
CANNON-
BALL.

OH
YEAH,
LADY. IT
SURELY
DOES.

YOU
KNOW HOW
ATTRACTIVE I
FIND YOU.
I CAN DO
THINGS FOR
YOU.

RIGHT NOW
YOU COULD JUST
GIVE UP... AND
SAVE ME SOME
HASSLE.



BAD MOVE,
CANNONBALL.
YOU GOT CLOSE
ENOUGH FOR
ME TO SLOW
YOU DOWN...

THAT MAKES
YOU VULNERABLE
TO MY
STINGERS.

SORRY,
BOY. IT
COULD HAVE
BEEN FUN
FOR THE TWO
OF US.

BUT THINK OF THE
FAR GREATER FUN
AWAITING THE THREE
OF US.

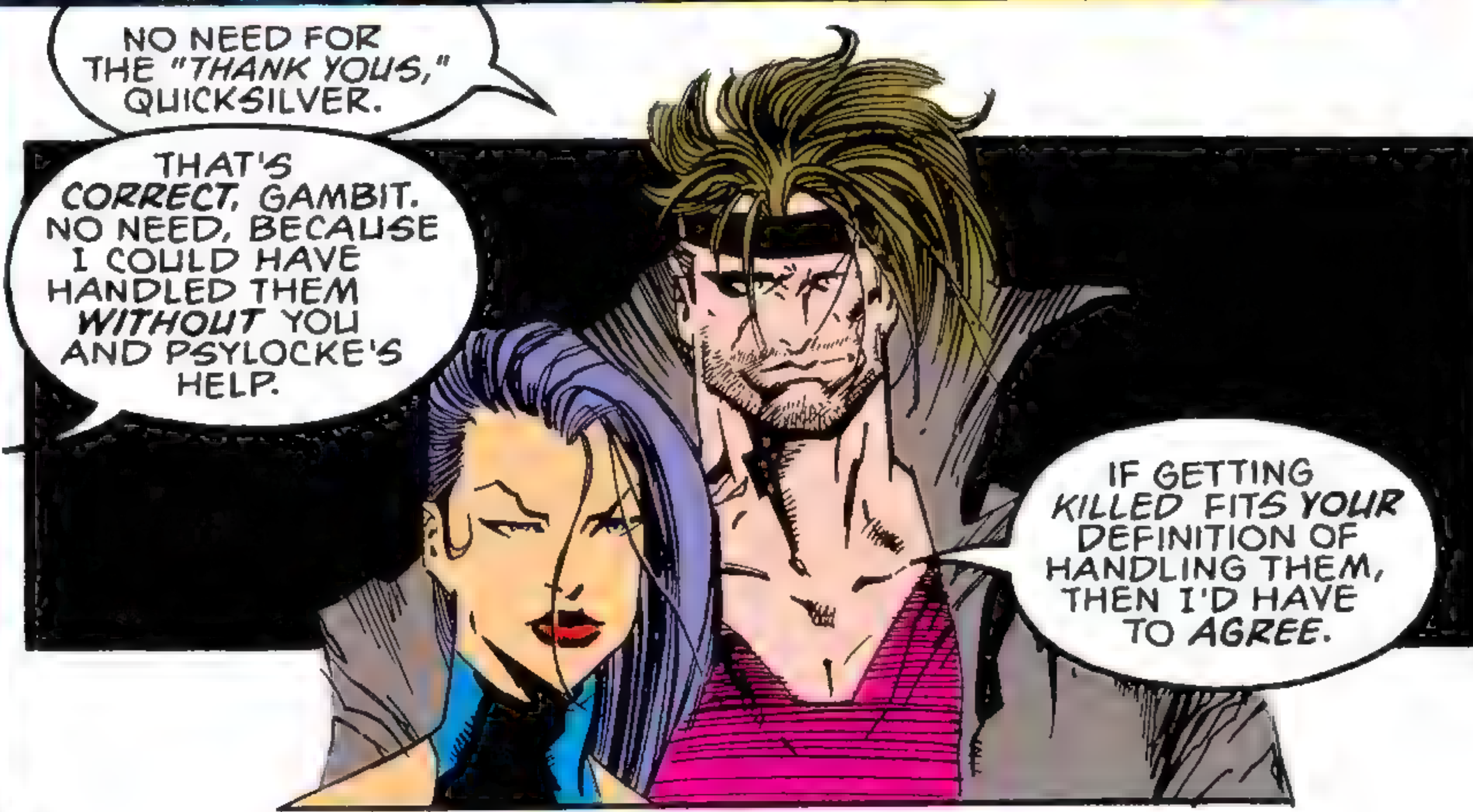
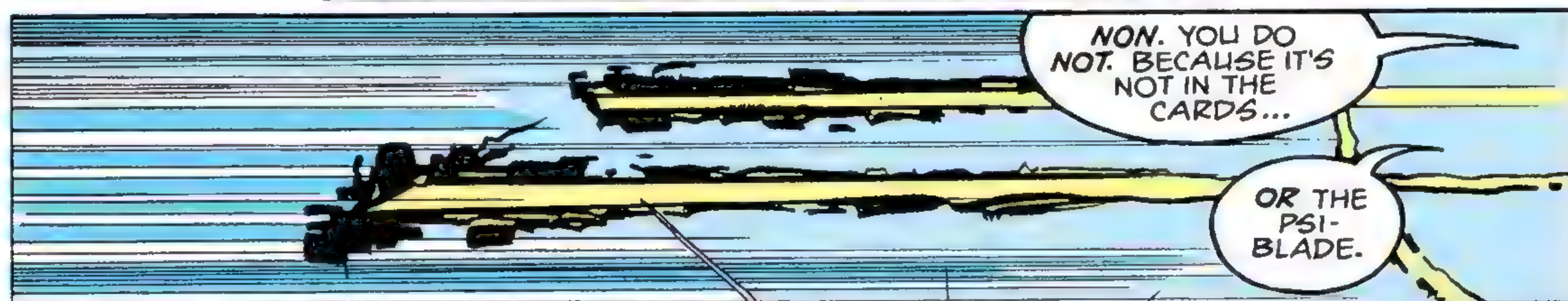
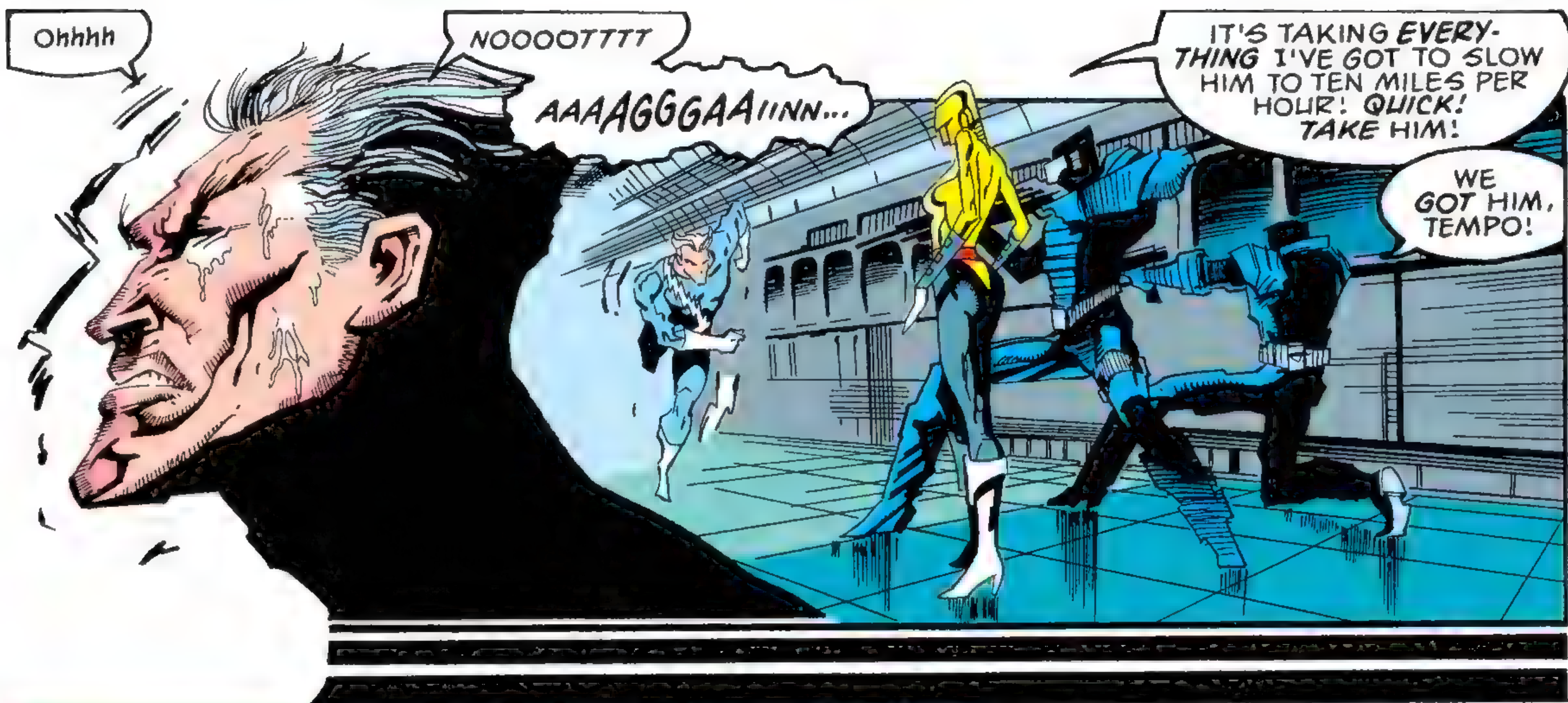
CANNON-
BALL'S PROBLEM
IS THAT, NO MATTER
HOW MUCH HE
TRIES, HE STILL
GETS ALL GOOSHY
WHEN IT COMES TA
FIGHTIN'
"WOMEN
FOLK."

ODDLY
ENOUGH,
WE DON'T
HAVE THAT
DILEMMA.

WHOA...
GONNA TAKE
...A FEW
MINUTES...

T'SHAKE
OFF
THAT...

OOO
OOO
FFF



ELSEWHERE...

ALL
RIGHT!
COME ON!
TAKE
YOUR
SHOT!

YOU
THINK LEAVING
ME IN DARKNESS
FOR HOURS IS
GOING TO *BOTHER*
ME? OR EVEN
SLOW ME
DOWN?

I HEAR
YOU, SCUTTLE
AROUND, LIKE
THE *RATS* YOU
ARE!

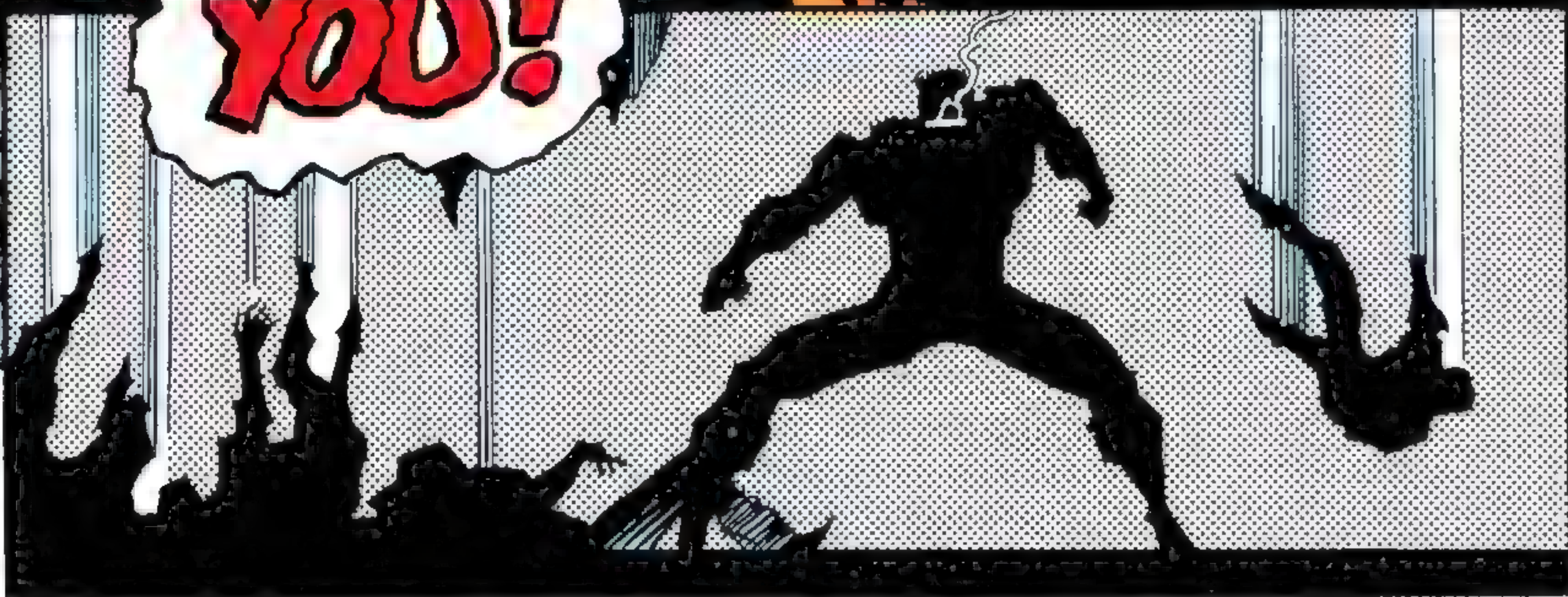
COME
ON, THEN!
I'M
READY!

MORE
THAN
READY!

I'LL TAKE
YOU ALL DOWN,
EVEN IF I HAVE TO
LEVEL THIS PLACE!
I'M NOT
AFRAID OF YOU!
JEAN'S NOT
AFRAID OF
YOU!

THE
ONLY ONES
STINKING OF
FEAR
IN HERE ARE
YOU!

YOU!

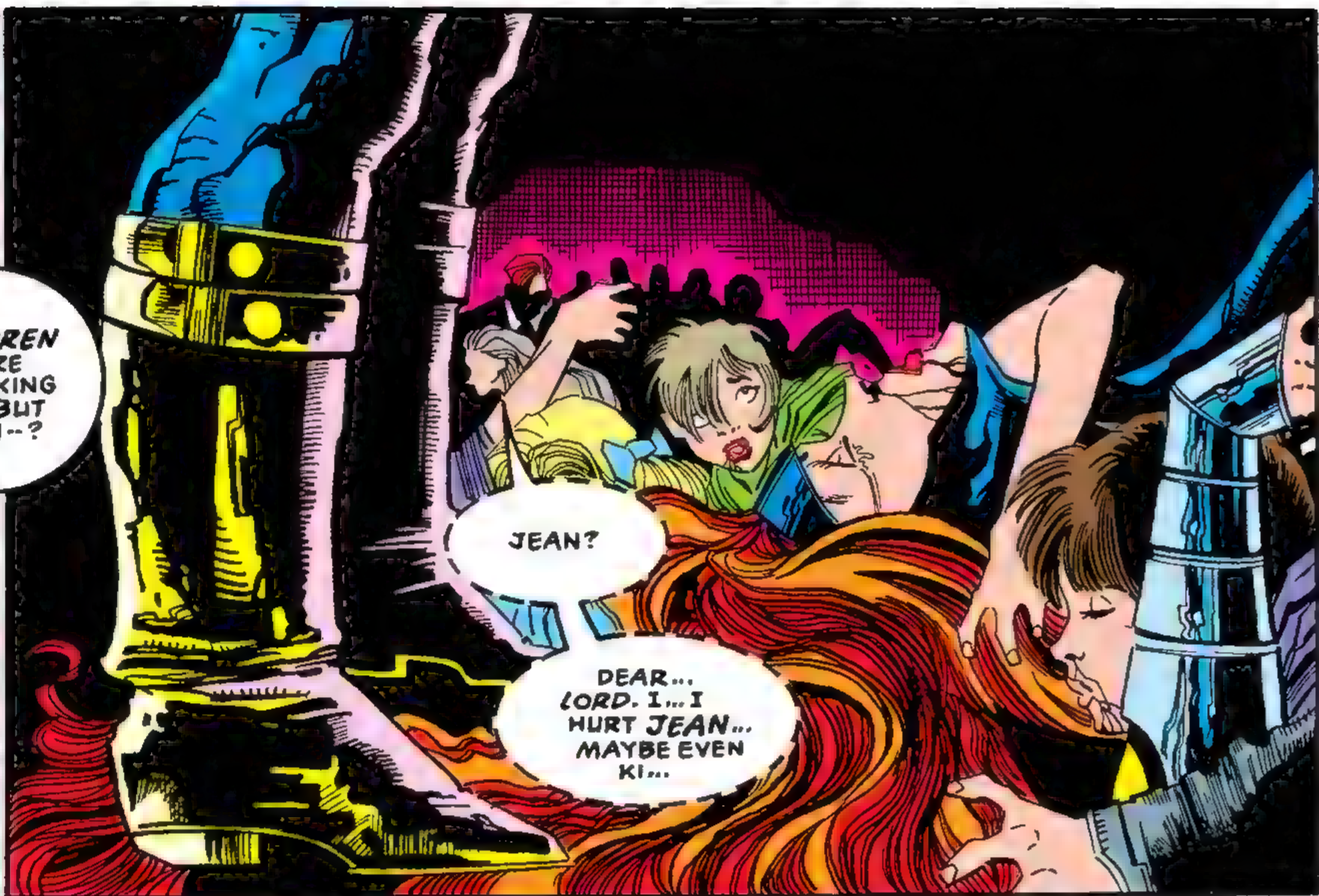




YOU...

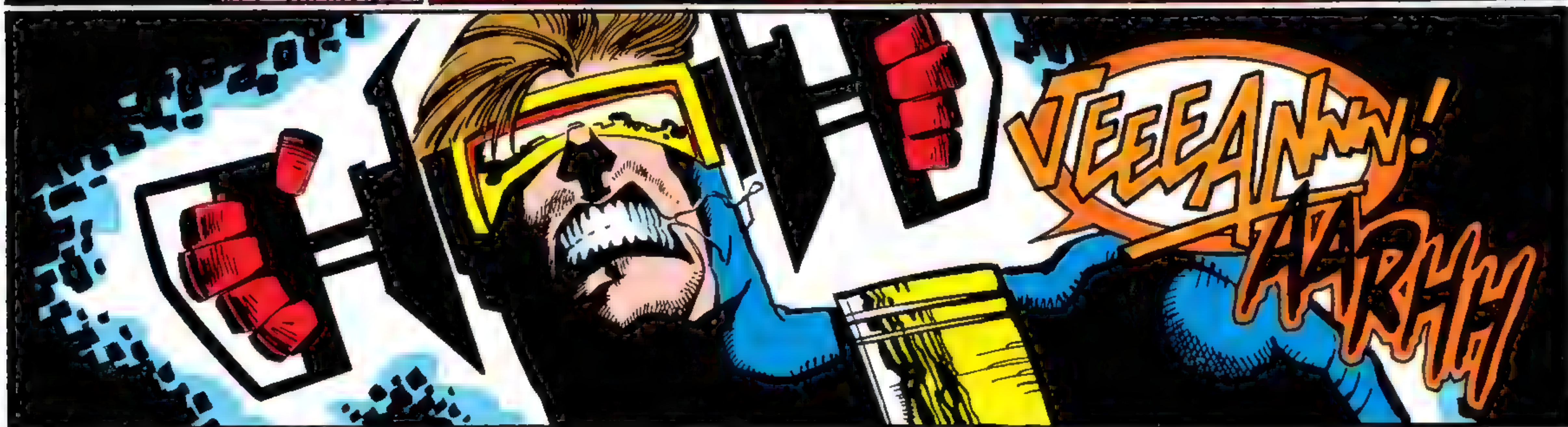
YOU'RE...
CHILDREN?

CHILDREN
WERE
ATTACKING
ME? BUT
WH--?



JEAN?

DEAR...
LORD... I... I
HURT JEAN...
MAYBE EVEN
KI...



YOU'RE A BORN
LEADER, CYCLOPS.
SOMEONE WHO
ALWAYS BELIEVES
HE KNOWS **JUST**
WHAT TO DO.

BUT SOME-
TIMES YOU'RE
OPERATING
COMPLETELY
IN THE
DARK.

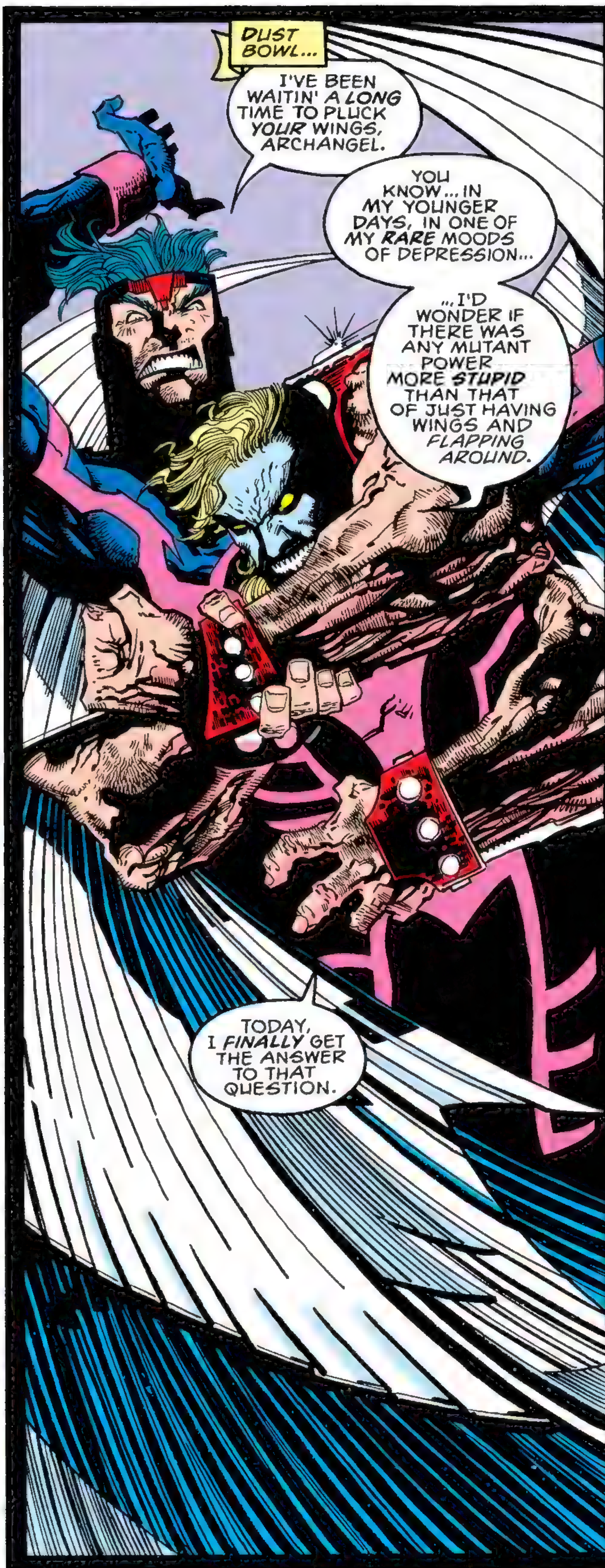


AND
SOMETIMES,
AS YOU DO
THESE THINGS,
YOU WIND UP
INJURING THE
ONES YOU
LOVE.



DOES
THAT
MATTER
TO YOU
AT
ALL?

NO... NO,
SOMEHOW,
I DOUBT
THAT IT
DOES.



DUST BOWL...

I'VE BEEN WAITIN' A LONG TIME TO PLUCK YOUR WINGS, ARCHANGEL.

YOU KNOW... IN MY YOUNGER DAYS, IN ONE OF MY RARE MOODS OF DEPRESSION...

...I'D WONDER IF THERE WAS ANY MUTANT POWER MORE STUPID THAN THAT OF JUST HAVING WINGS AND FLAPPING AROUND.

TODAY, I FINALLY GET THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION.

THANKS FOR PROVIDING IT, FOREARM.

YOU CUT ME!

ACTUALLY, I LET YOU OFF EAS--

URKHH!

I'M NOT LETTIN' YOU OFF, SMART GUY!

TRY TO STOP ME BY TOSSING ME.

IDIOT.

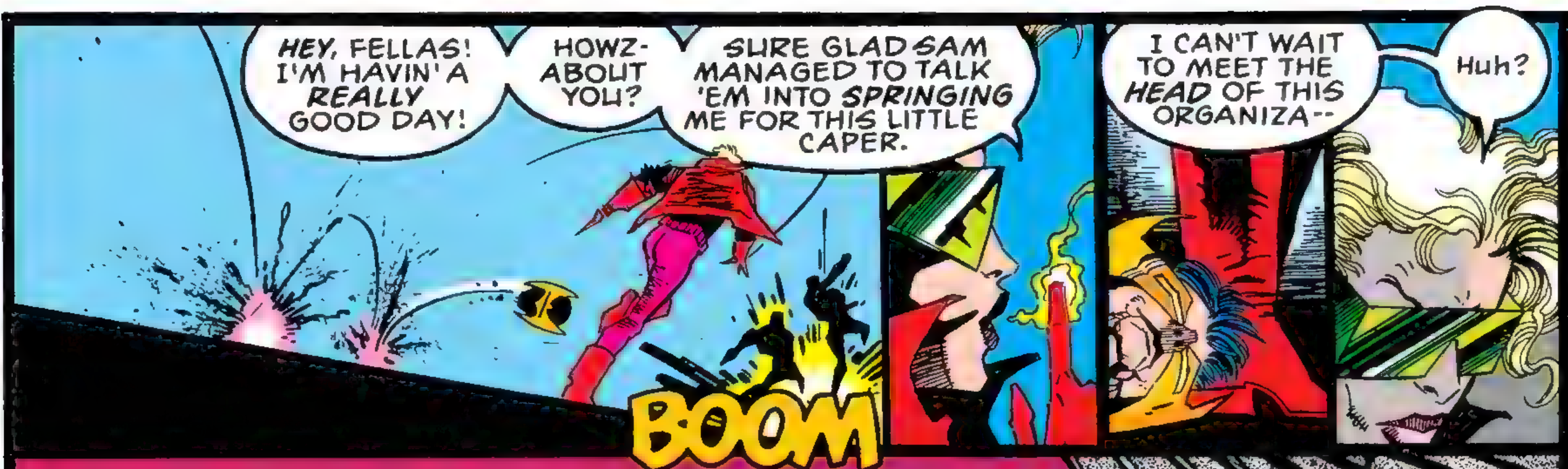
NO IDIOT. HE MANEUVERED YOU SO THAT I COULD TAKE YOU UNAWARES.

I DESPISE SNEAK ATTACKS, BUT KAMIKAZE WILL TAKE HIS VICTORIES ANY WAY HE...

STOP DODGING AROUND, FOREARM.

YOU'RE JUST DRAGGING THIS OUT.

KKH



HEY, FELLAS!
I'M HAVIN' A
REALLY
GOOD DAY!

HOWZ-
ABOUT
YOU?

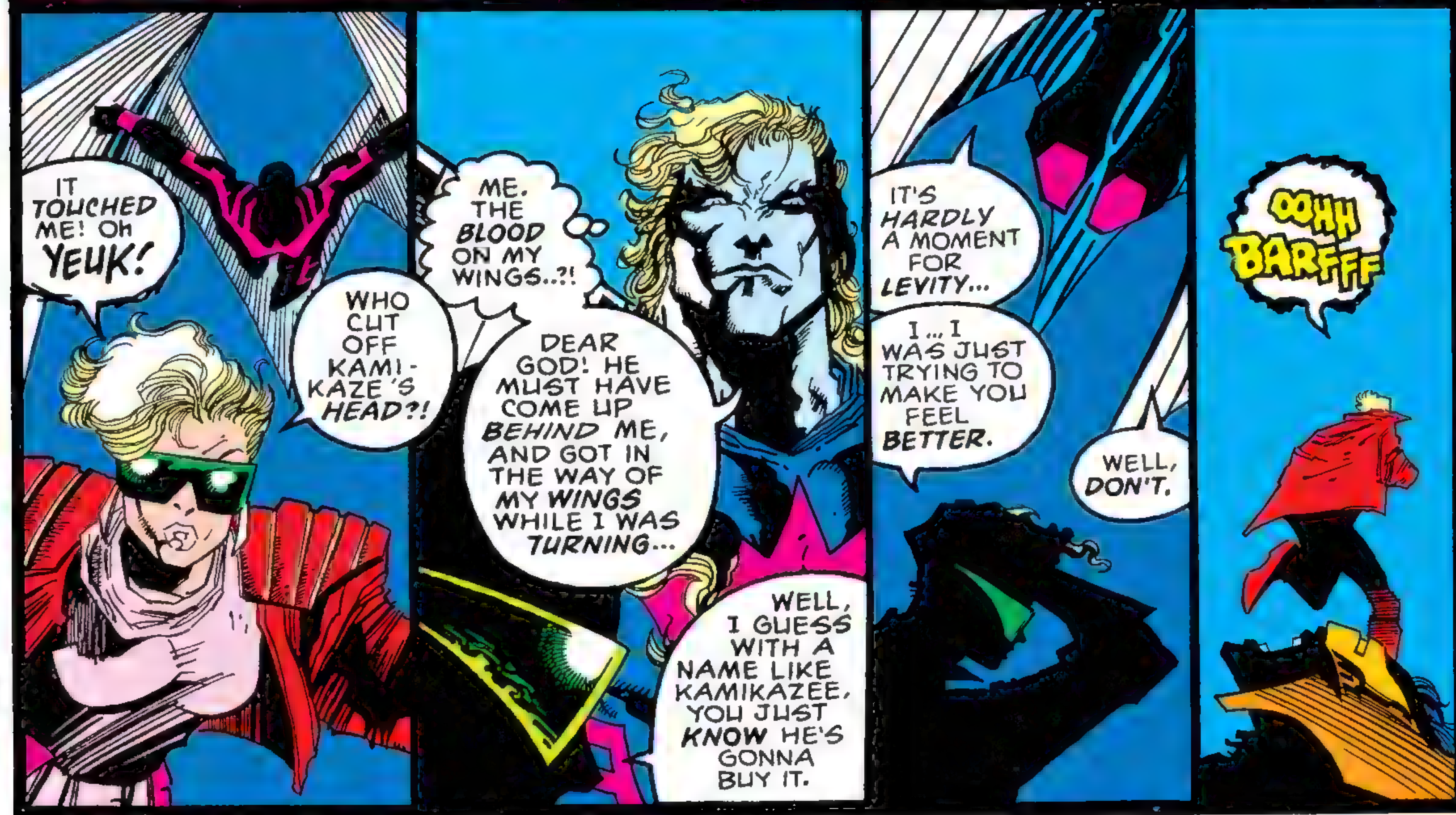
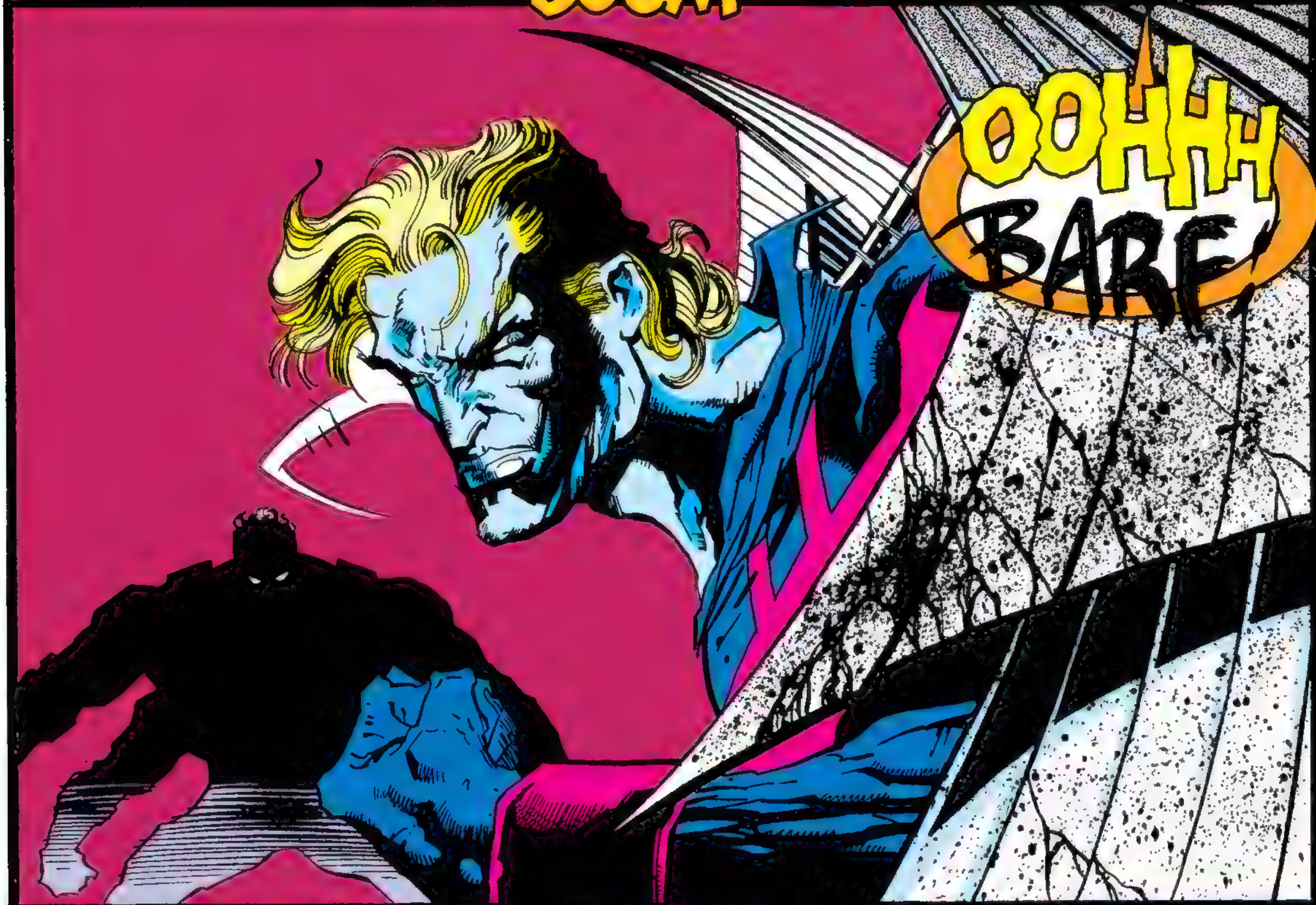
SURE GLAD SAM
MANAGED TO TALK
'EM INTO SPRINGING
ME FOR THIS LITTLE
CAPER.

I CAN'T WAIT
TO MEET THE
HEAD OF THIS
ORGANIZA--

Huh?

BOOM

**OOHHH
BARE**



IT
TOUCHED
ME! OH
YEUK!

WHO
CUT
OFF
KAMI-
KAZE'S
HEAD?!

ME.
THE
BLOOD
ON MY
WINGS...?!

DEAR
GOD! HE
MUST HAVE
COME UP
BEHIND ME,
AND GOT IN
THE WAY OF
MY WINGS
WHILE I WAS
TURNING...

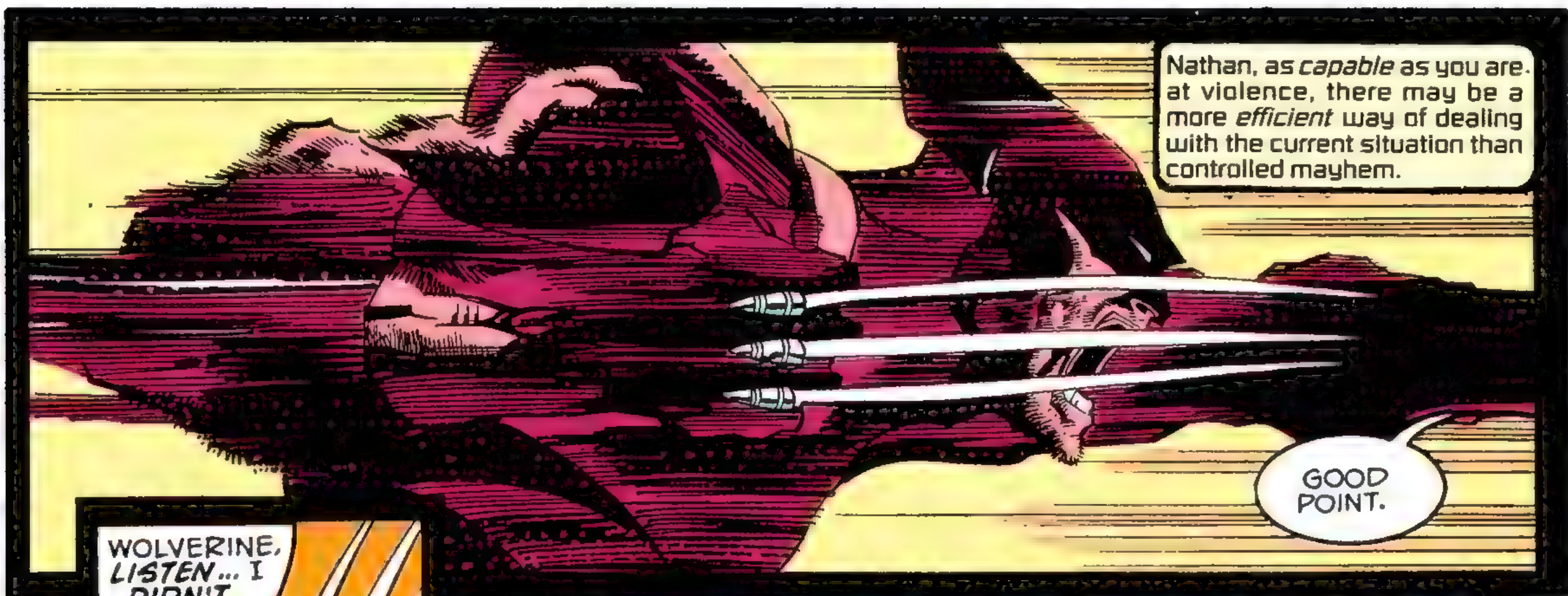
WELL,
I GUESS
WITH A
NAME LIKE
KAMIKAZEE,
YOU JUST
KNOW HE'S
GONNA
BUY IT.

IT'S
HARDLY
A MOMENT
FOR
LEVITY...

I... I
WAS JUST
TRYING TO
MAKE YOU
FEEL
BETTER.

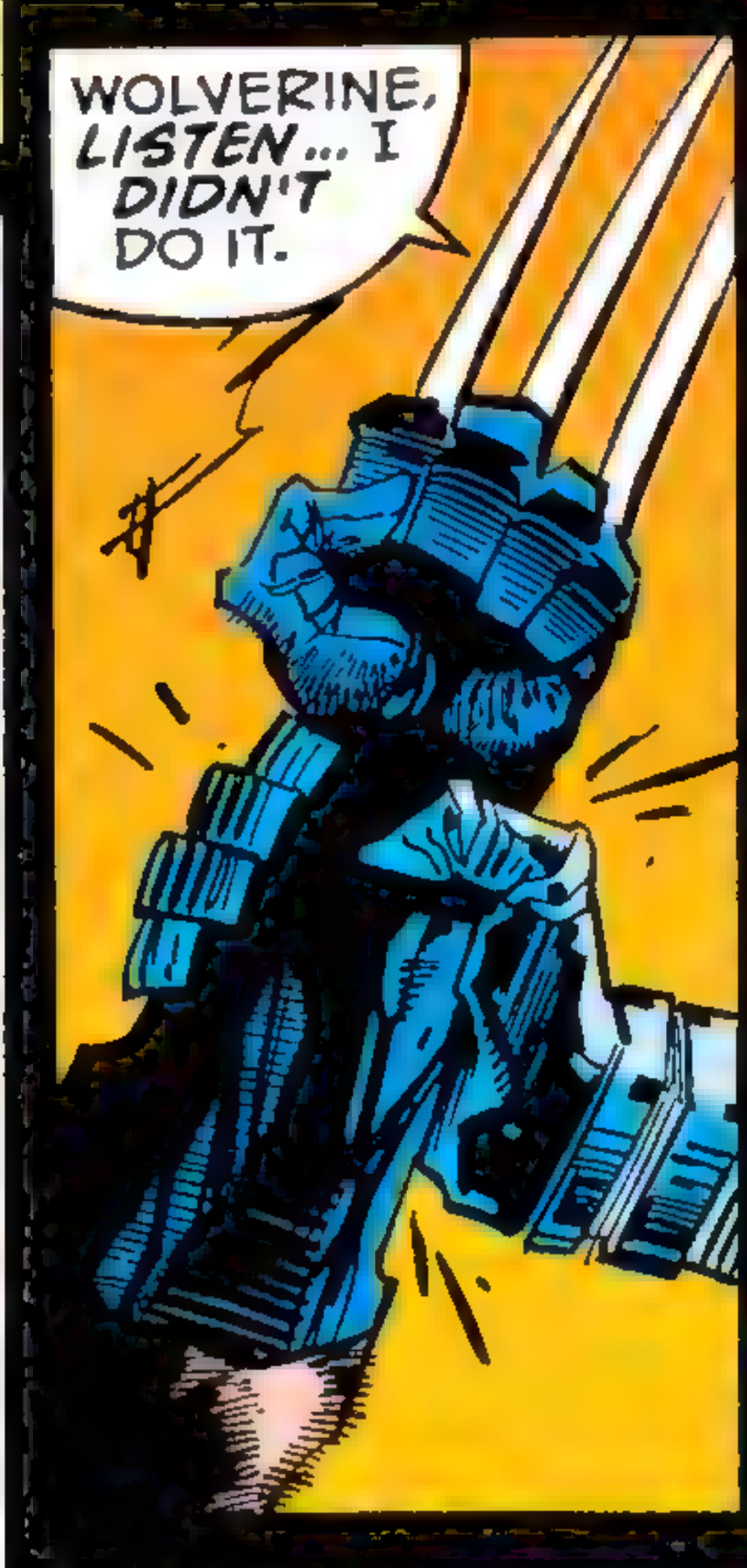
WELL,
DON'T.

**OOHH
BARFFF**

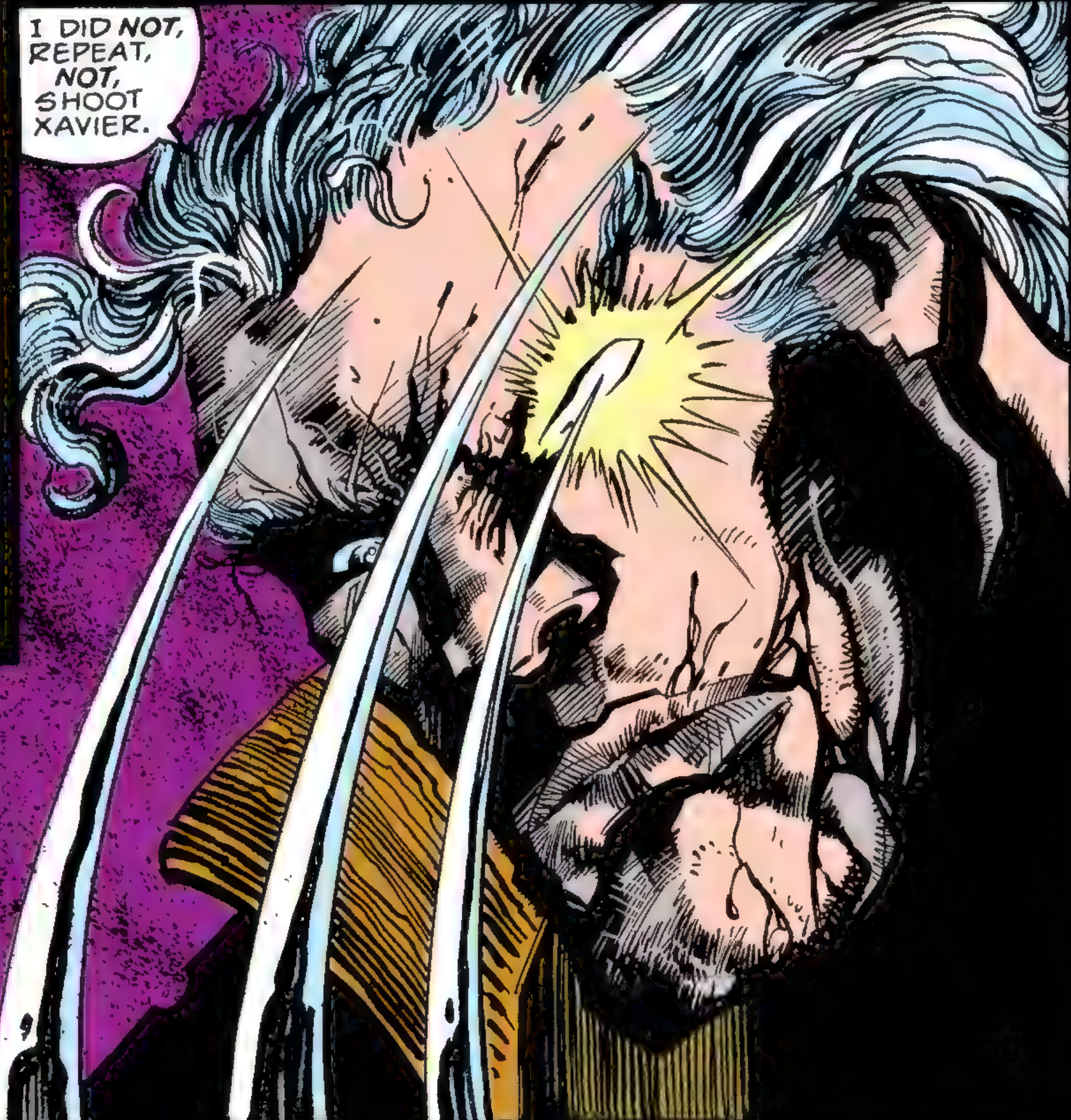


Nathan, as *capable* as you are at violence, there may be a more *efficient* way of dealing with the current situation than controlled mayhem.

GOOD POINT.



WOLVERINE, LISTEN... I DIDN'T DO IT.



I DID NOT, REPEAT, NOT, SHOOT XAVIER.

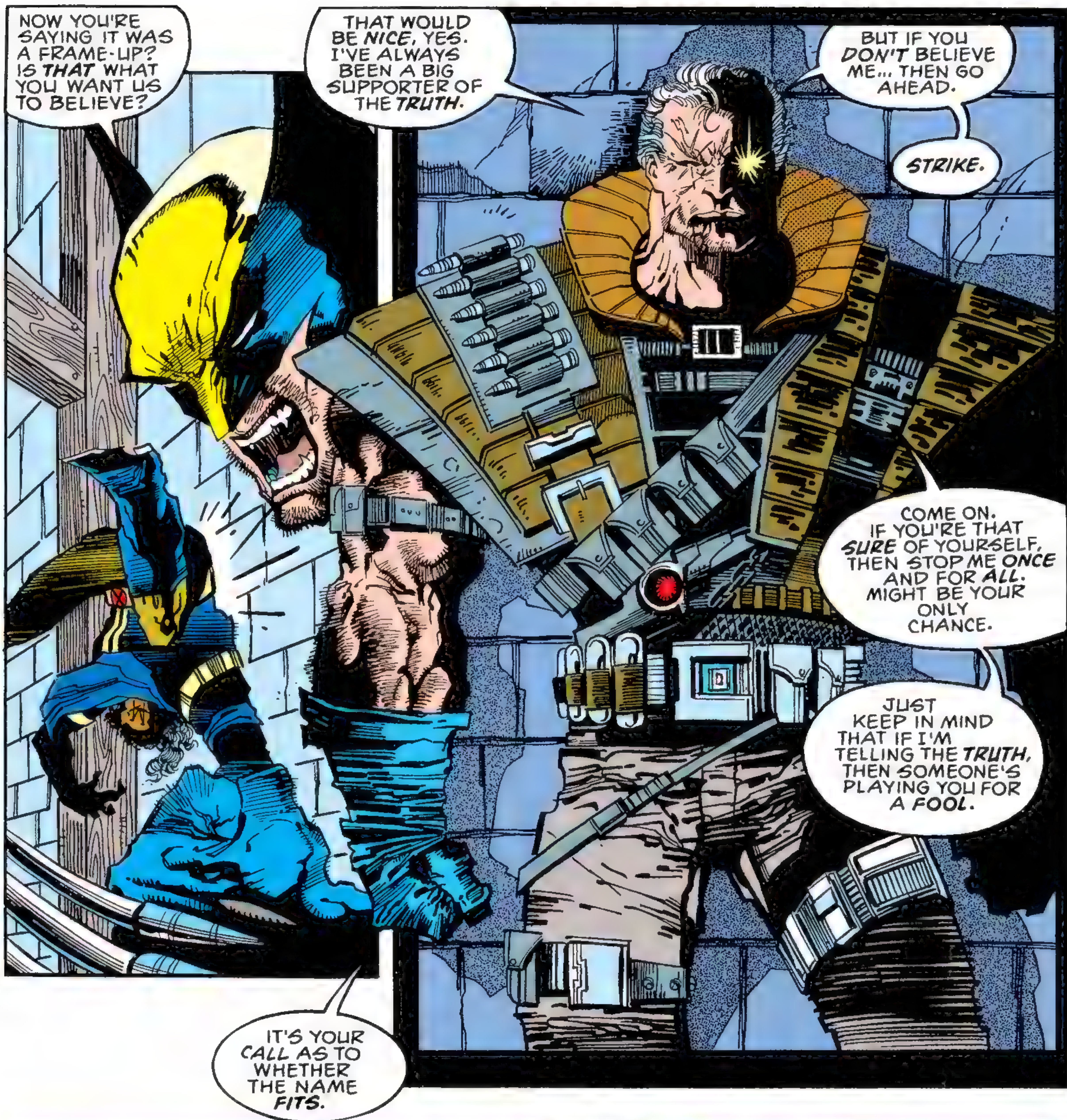


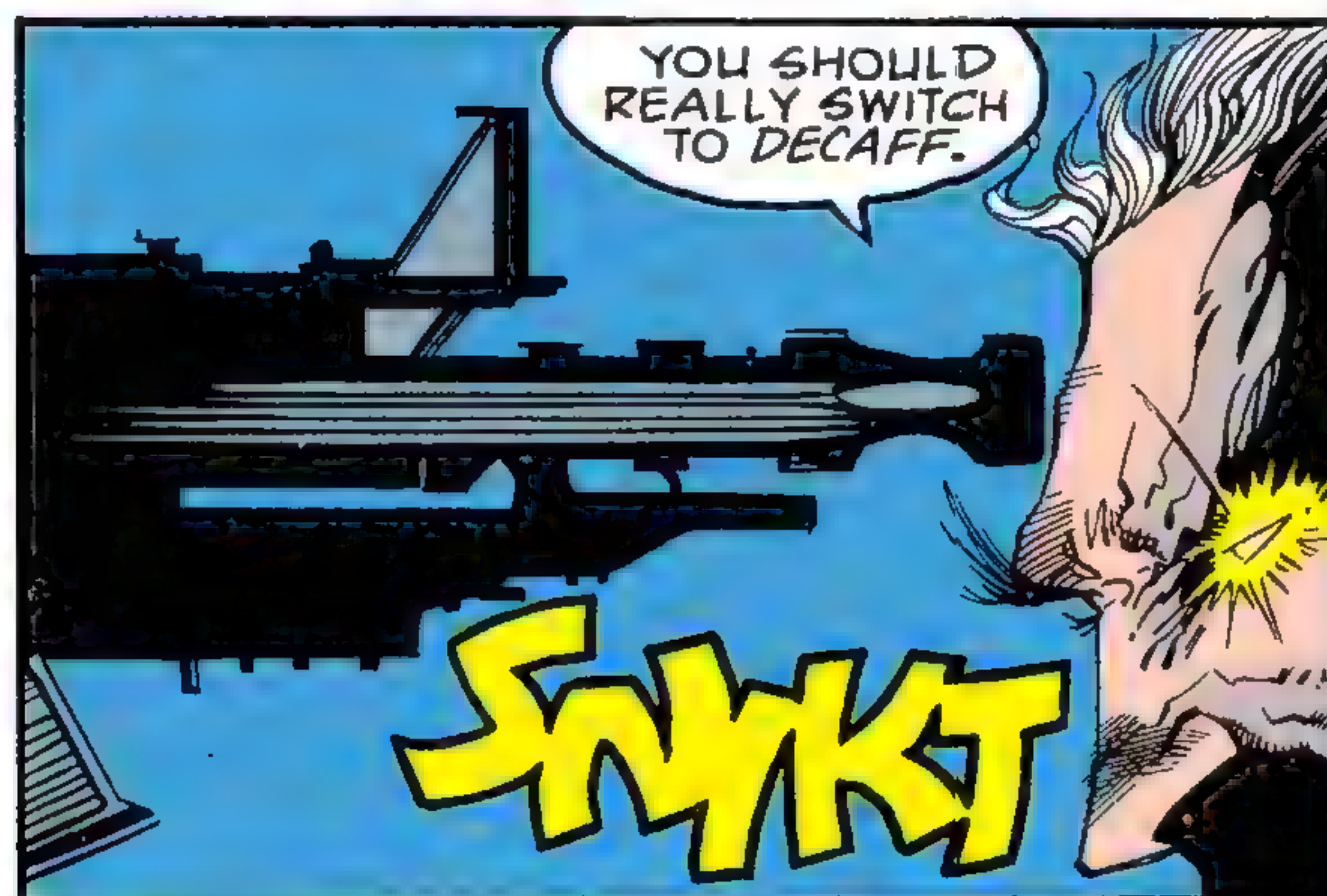
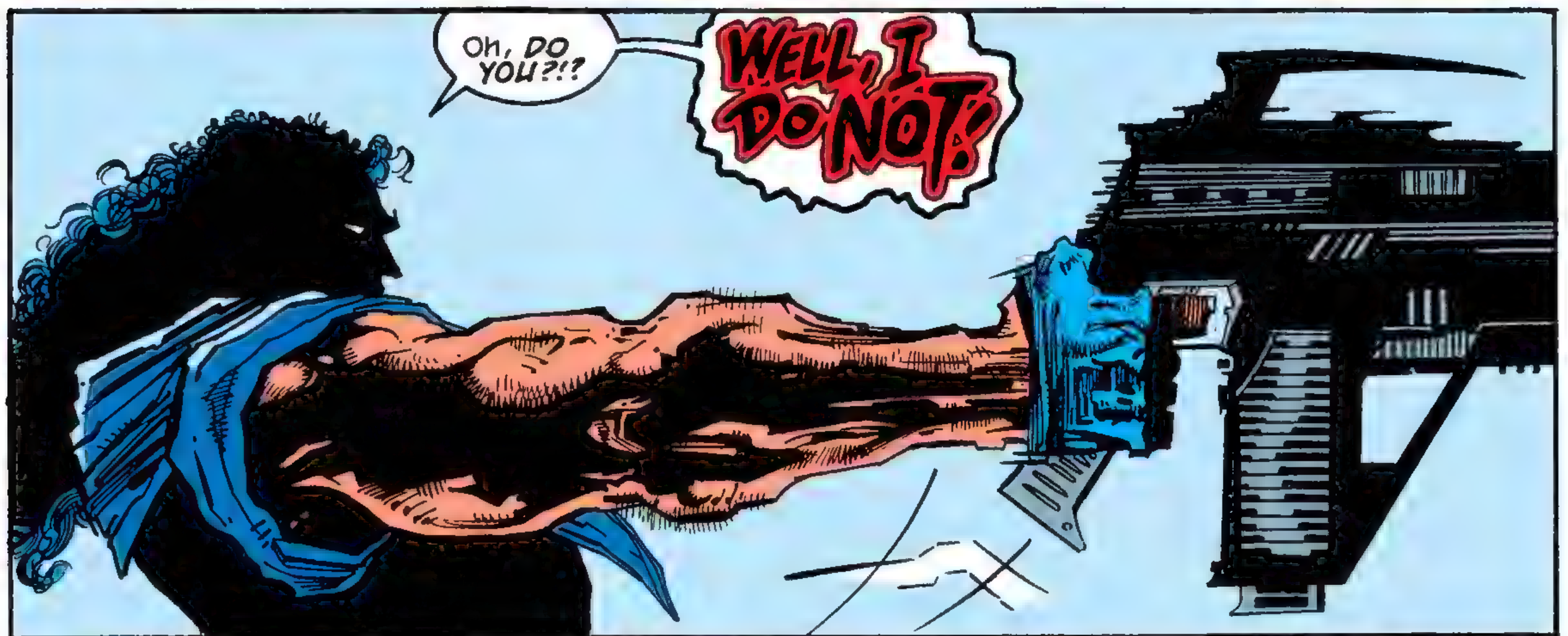
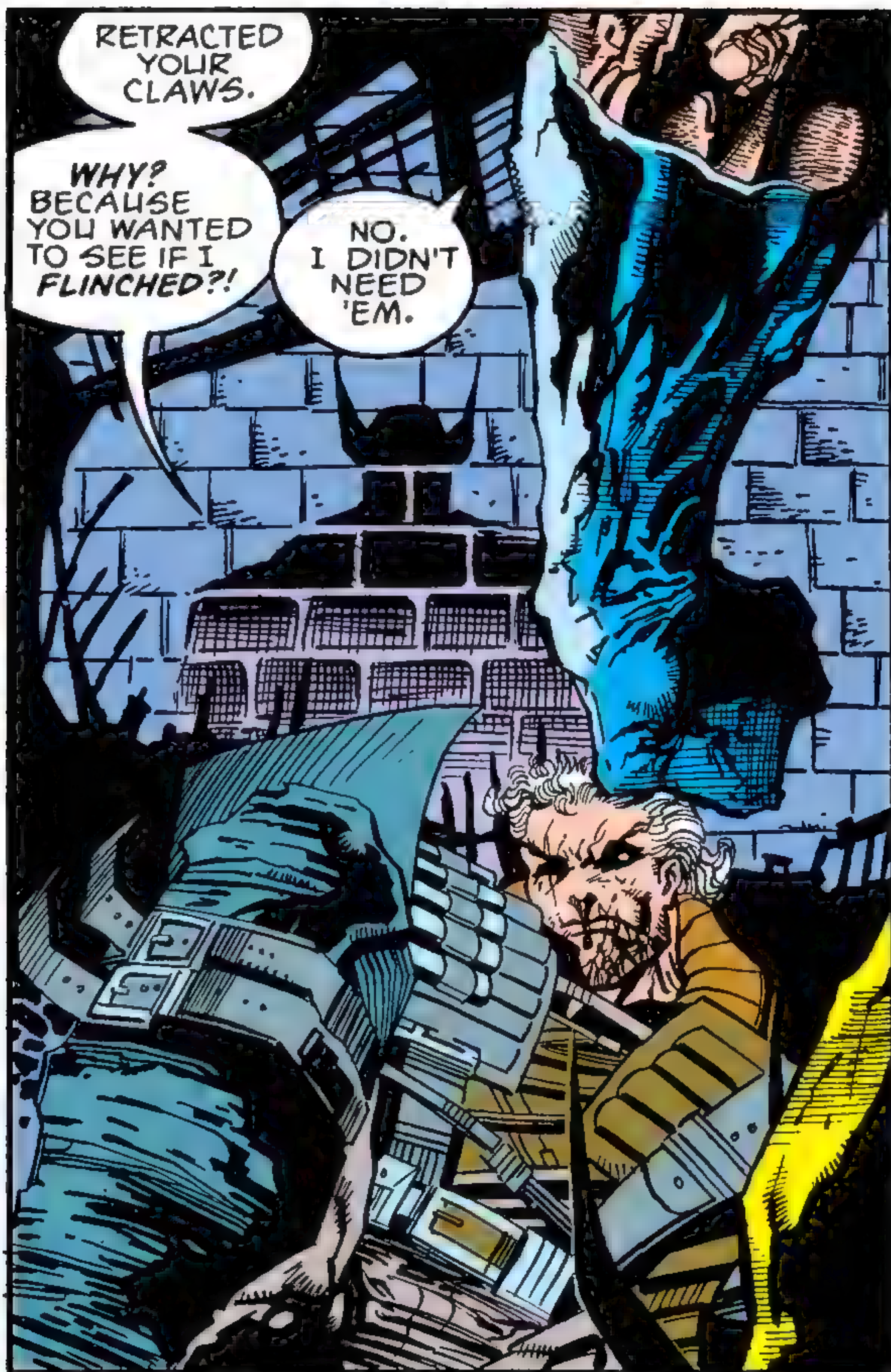
WE SAW YOU, MURDERER.

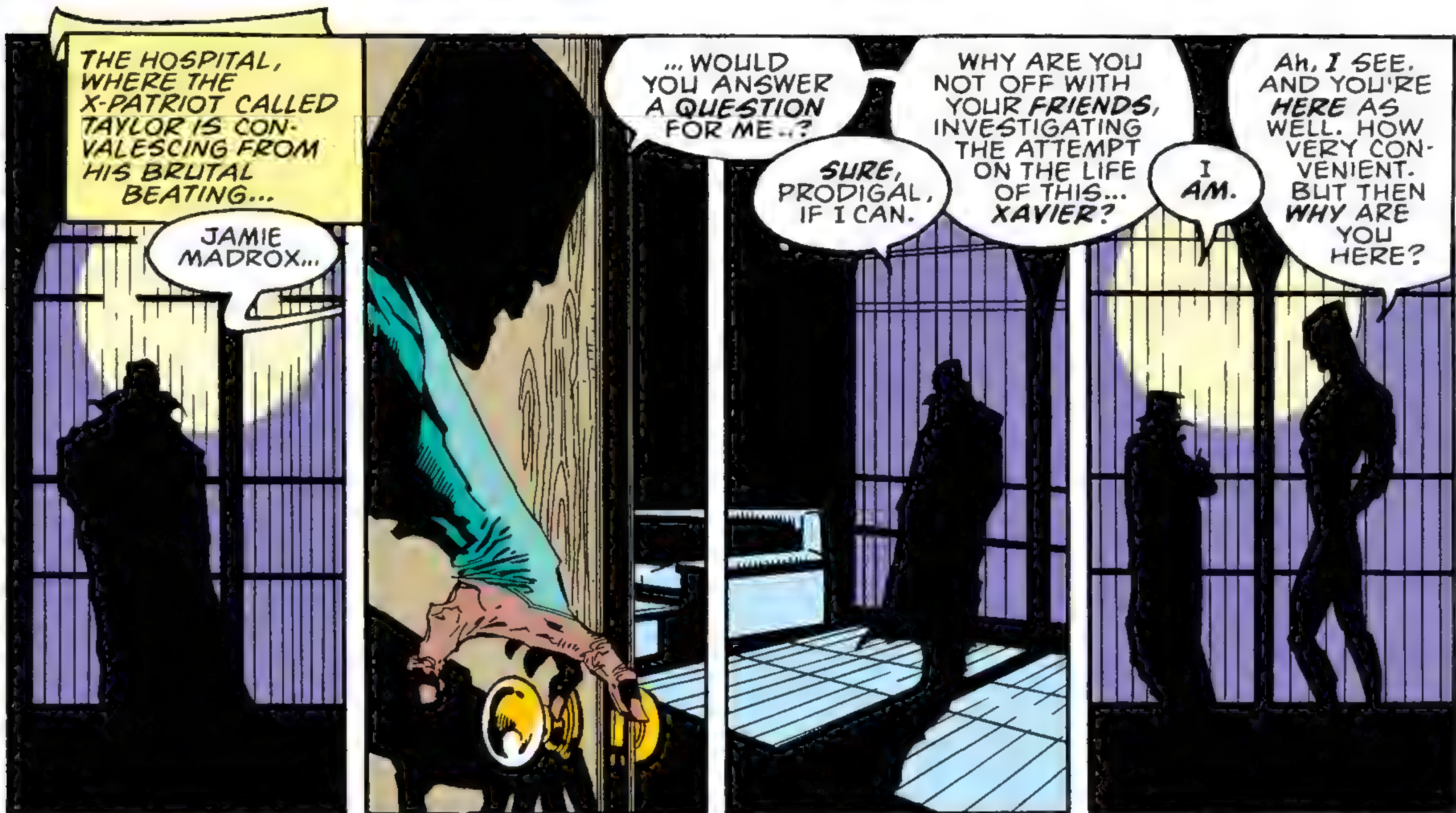
I DO NOT WANT YOUR LIES! I WANT YOUR CONFESSION!

AND THEN I WANT YOUR HEAD!

I'M AFRAID YOU'RE GOING TO COME UP EMPTY ON BOTH COUNTS, CHIEF.







MEANWHILE...
BACK IN DUST BOWL...

I'M GONNA
GUT YOU FROM
CROTCH TO
STERNUM,
GAMBIT!

AND
I HAVE A
"GUT" FEELING,
HOMME, THAT IT WILL
NOT BE SO. FOR
ACTIONS SPEAK
LOUDER THAN WORDS,
AND MY
ACTIONS...

...THEY
POSITIVELY
SCREAM!

HAH!
MISSED!

THAT
WON'T BE
THE ONLY
SCREAMING
GOING ON
AROUND
HERE,
CAJUN!

WHOOPS!
KNOCKED 'IM
COLD! AH, WELL...
I'LL HAVE TO
LIVE WITH YOU
SLEEPING
THROUGH YOUR
DISEM-
BOWELMENT.

TOO
BAD YOU
WON'T
LIVE
WITH--

UNNH!

IF YOUR
TYPE TALKED
LESS AND DID
MORE, YOU'D
HAVE BEEN
RULING THE
WORLD YEARS
AGO.



STILL, I
SHOULD BE
GRATEFUL.
AFTER
ALL...

...IT
GAVE ME
THE CHANCE
TO EVEN THE
SCORE WITH
GAMBIT AND
AVOID HIS
SMIRKING--

AAGHH



YEAH,
IT WAS REAL
NICE YOU
HELPED
GAMBIT.

TOO
BAD NOBODY'S
AROUND TO
HELP YOU!

BE SURE TO PICK
UP OUR NEXT CHAPTER

IN
X-MEN
#15

SO THAT YOU CAN
FIND OUT IF

**REAPER
KILLS
GAMBIT &
QUICKSILVER!**

AS THE X-CUTIONER'S SONG
CONTINUES!

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X-CUTIONER'S SONG

PART 7

X-MEN



BEYOND
VIDEO...
THE *NEW*
**Dragon
Quest**
GAME!
(Announcements
Inside)

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ANDY KUBER
M. PENNINGTON 92

CYCLOPS AND JEAN GREY-- PRISONERS OF STRYFE! IN AN ATTEMPT TO RESCUE THEM, AN X-SQUADRON HAS ATTACKED THE MUTANT LIBERATION FRONT! PROFESSOR XAVIER-- DYING FROM A TECHNO-ORGANIC VIRUS! ONLY ONE OF THEIR GREATEST ENEMIES CAN SAVE THEM NOW-- BUT CAN APOCALYPSE SAVE HIMSELF?

THE CUTIONER'S SONG CONTINUES!

HIDDEN BEHIND THE VENEER OF REASON IN MAN--

-- ARE DARK PASSIONS IN SEARCH OF RELEASE.

HIDDEN WITHIN THE VENEER OF CIVILITY IN MANY OF TODAY'S MUTANTS --

-- ARE FLAMING ANGERS WHICH ARE ALL TOO OFTEN STOKED.

HIDDEN BENEATH THE FACADE OF NORMALITY IN A SMALL ARKANSAS TOWN --

-- IS A MUTANT LIBERATION FRONT OPERATIONS BASE.

HIDDEN ALONGSIDE THE DISMANTLING OF THIS BASE BY THE X-SQUADRON--

-- IS A LITTLE VICTORY FOR THE TERRORIST MUTANT NAMED REAPER!

STAN LEE PROUDLY PRESENTS A CHORUS OF X-CITEMENT BY

The Camel's Back

FABIAN
NICIEZA
WRITER

ANDY
KUBERT
PENCILER

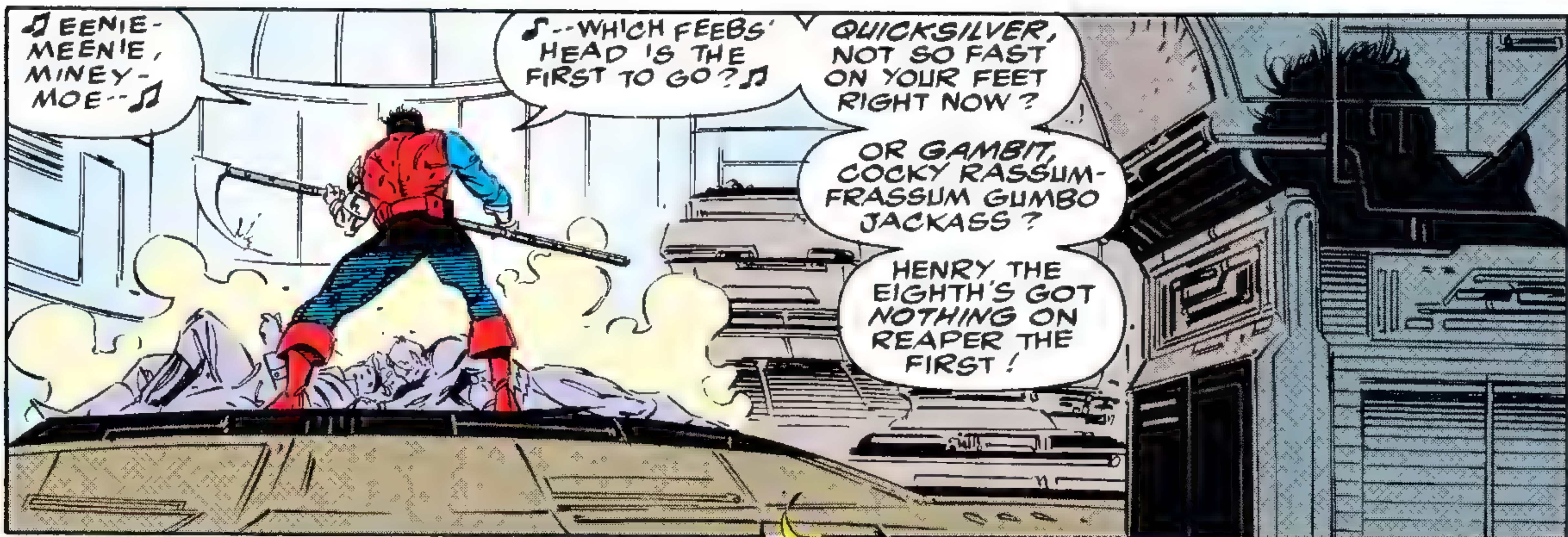
MARK
PENNINGTON
INKER

CHRIS
ELIOPOULOS
LETTERER

JOE
ROSAS
COLORIST

BOB
HARRAS
EDITOR

TOM
DEFALCO
EDITOR IN CHIEF



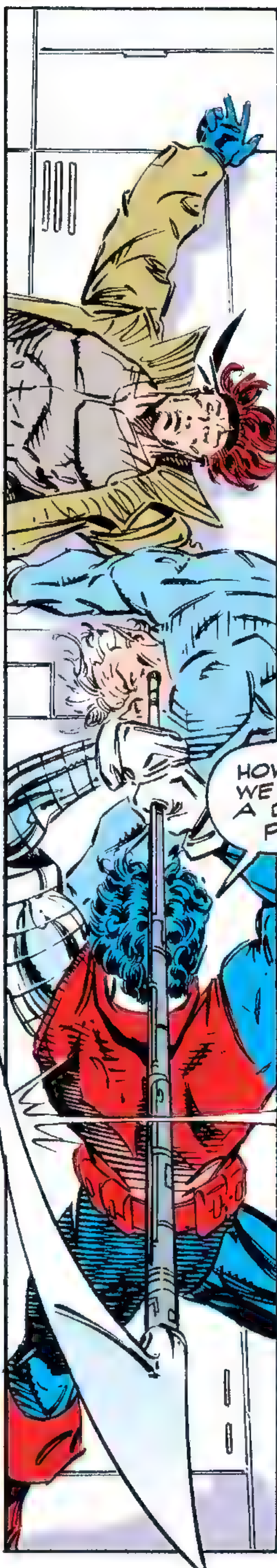
♪ EENIE-
MEENIE,
MINEY-
MOE--♪

♪--WHICH FEEBS'
HEAD IS THE
FIRST TO GO?♪

QUICKSILVER,
NOT SO FAST
ON YOUR FEET
RIGHT NOW?

OR GAMBIT,
COCKY RASSUM-
FRASSUM GUMBO
JACKASS?

HENRY THE
EIGHTH'S GOT
NOTHING ON
REAPER THE
FIRST!



HOWZABOUT
WE GO FOR
A DOUBLE-
PLAY?



HOW
ABOUT
NOT!

FWAR!



THUNK



UH-OH.
= Sniff
Sniff =

PLASMA
SMELL. SCYTHE'S
A WASTE.

NOT EVEN
BOB VILLA
COULD SAVE
IT.

UHM... HAVOK,
OL' PAL, WHAT
SAY WE DISCUSS
THIS...

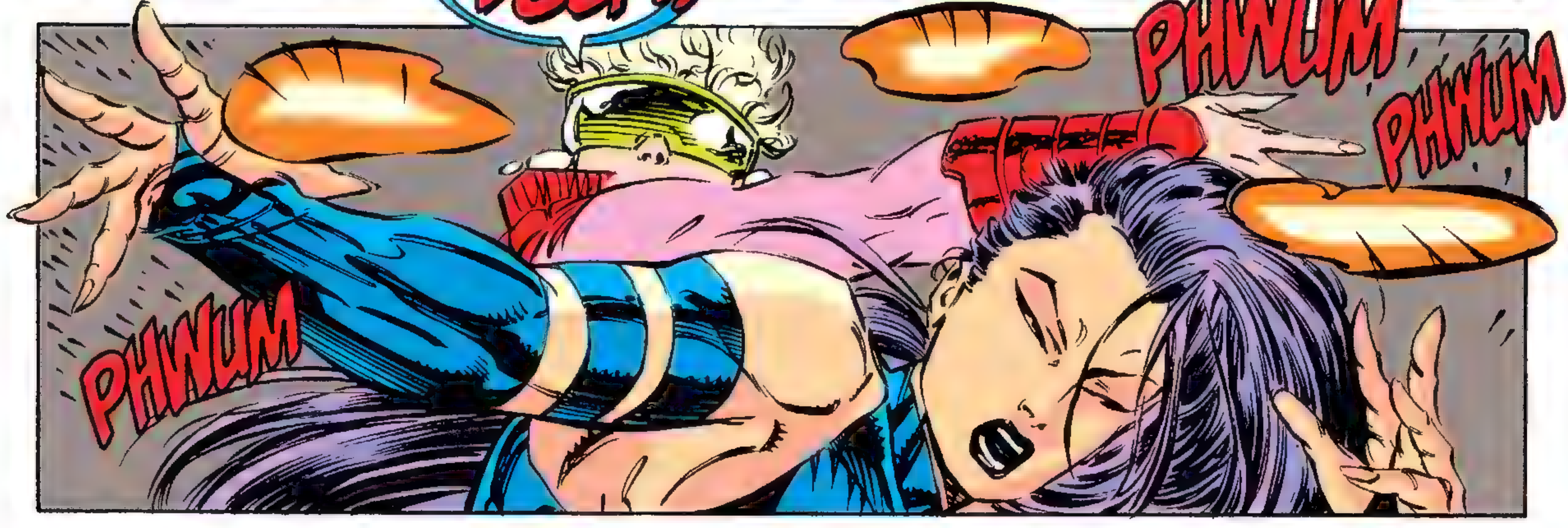


I'M SURE ALEX
WOULD SAY
WHAT IS ON ALL
OUR MINDS RIGHT
NOW, REAPER--
-- THAT THE
TIME FOR TALK
IS LONG
OVER!

YEAH, WELL,
NICE POSE,
AN' ALL,
PSYLOCKE--
--BUT AFTER
PSI-BLADIN'
HIM--
--THERE AIN'T
MUCH ON
REAP'S MIND
AT ALL.
'KAY?
AN' WON'T
BE ON YOURS
EITHER,
UNLESS
YOU--

--AWOULG--

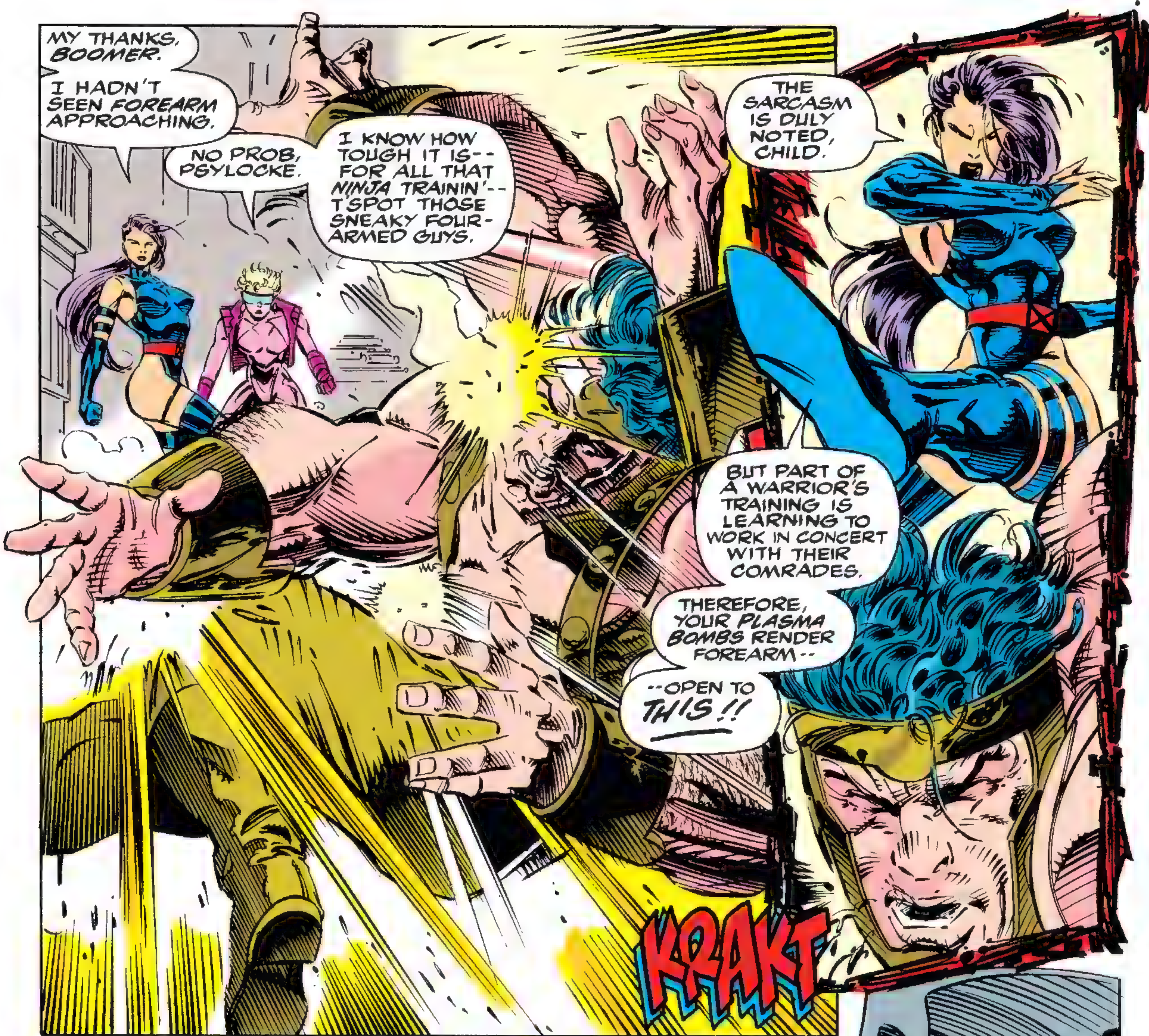
--DUCK!!



PHWUM

PHWUM

PHWUM



DO NOT BE
CONCERNED,
ROGUE--

-- IN TRUTH,
DRAGONESS
HAS NO
PLACE TO
RUN.

A CONTAINED
LIGHTNING ASSAULT
SHOULD DETER
HER FLIGHT.

ZAKKAKATH

THANKS
FOR THE
SET-UP,
LORNA.

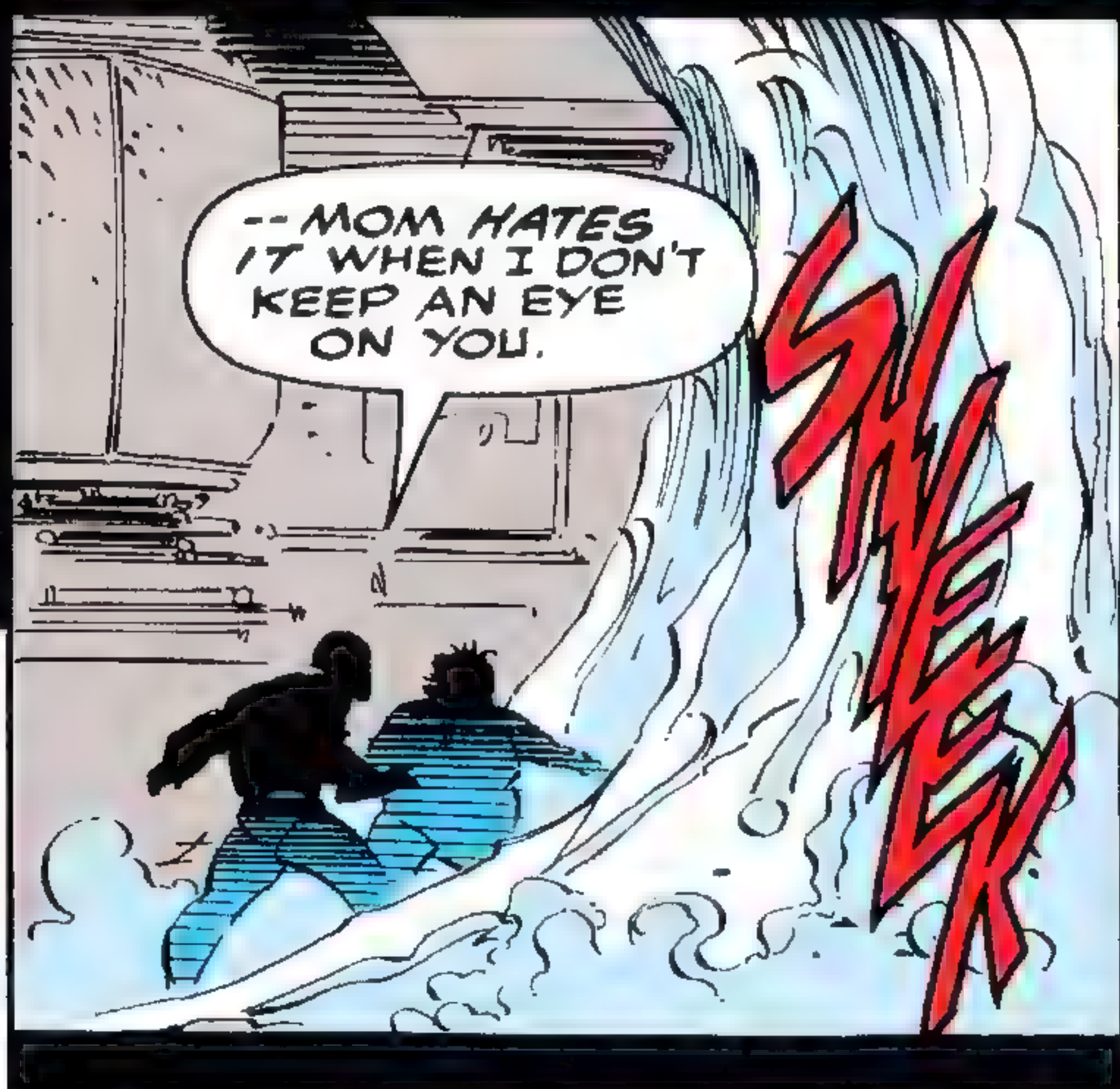
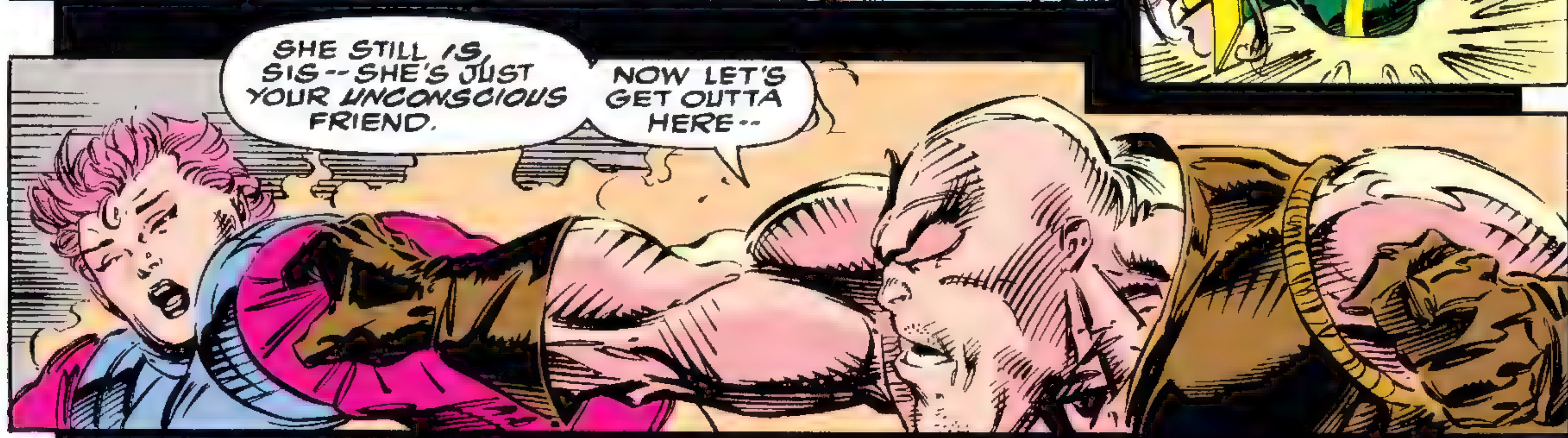
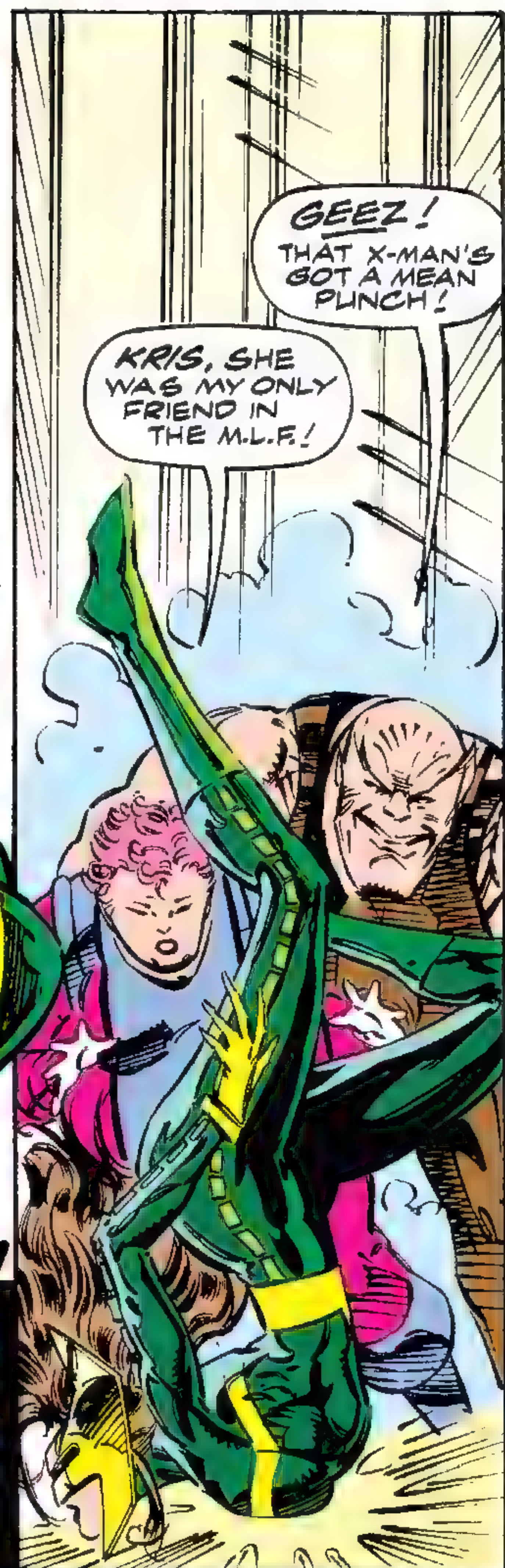
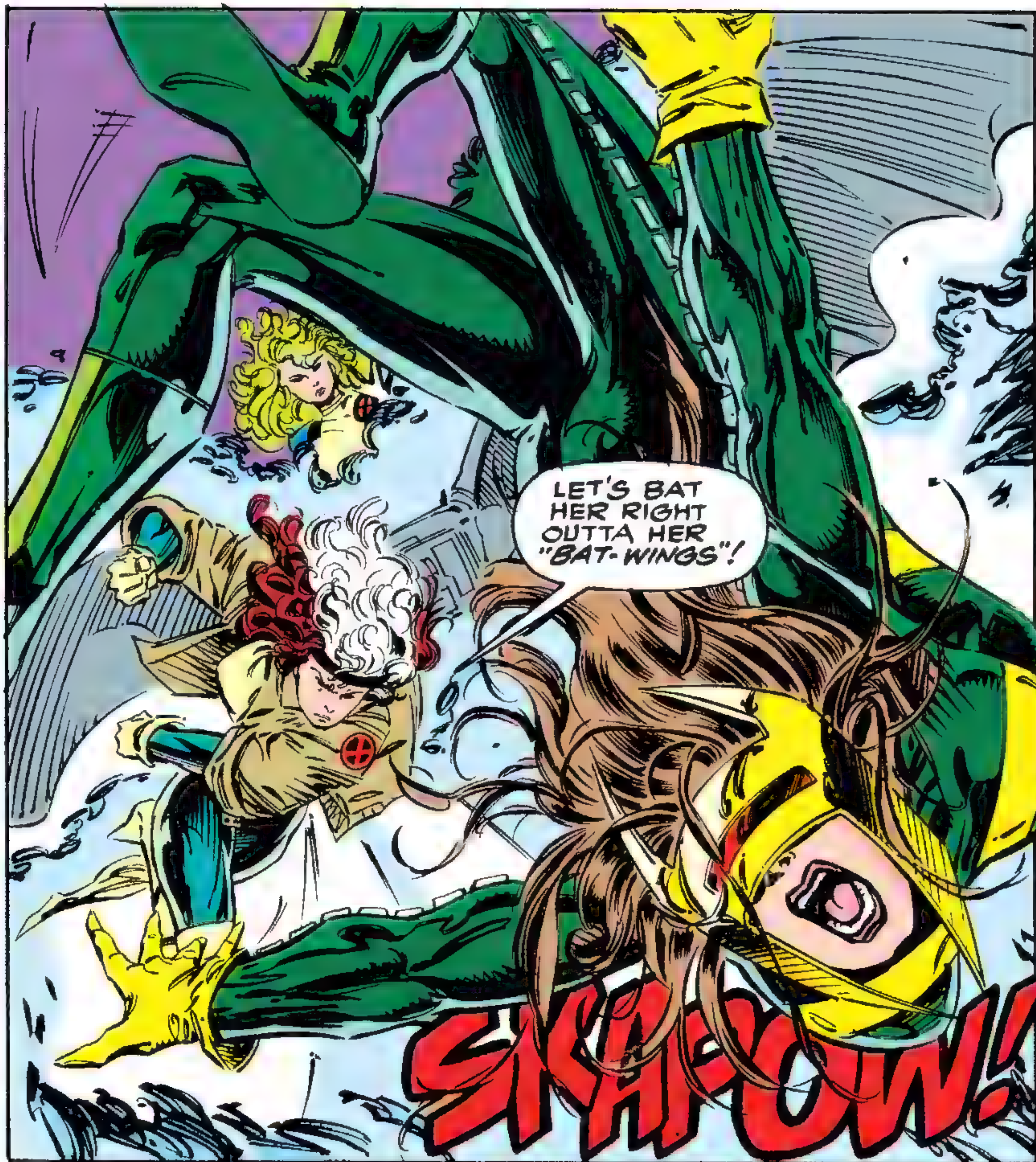
SURPRISE,
SURPRISE! HER
WINGS AREN'T
ORGANIC--THEY'RE
MECHANICAL!

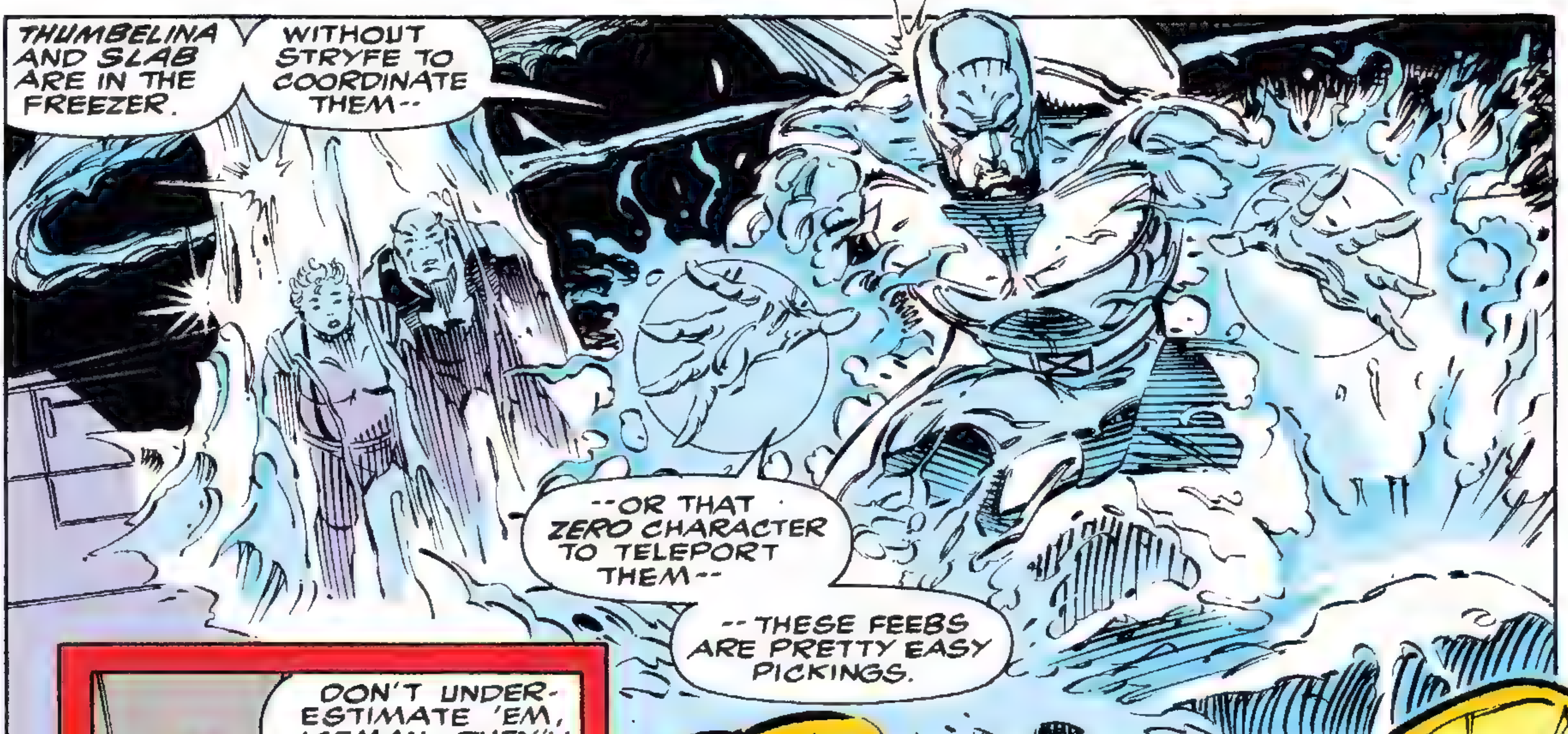
SO HER
ONLY MUTANT
POWERS'RE
HER BIO-
STINGS, HUH?

MUSTA FELT
INSECURE...
THINKIN' THEY
WEREN'T
ENOUGH.

POOR THING
SHE WAS RIGHT.

WHICH MAKES IT ALL
THE EASIER TO
MAGNETICALLY
HOLD HER STEADY
FOR YOU, ROGUE.



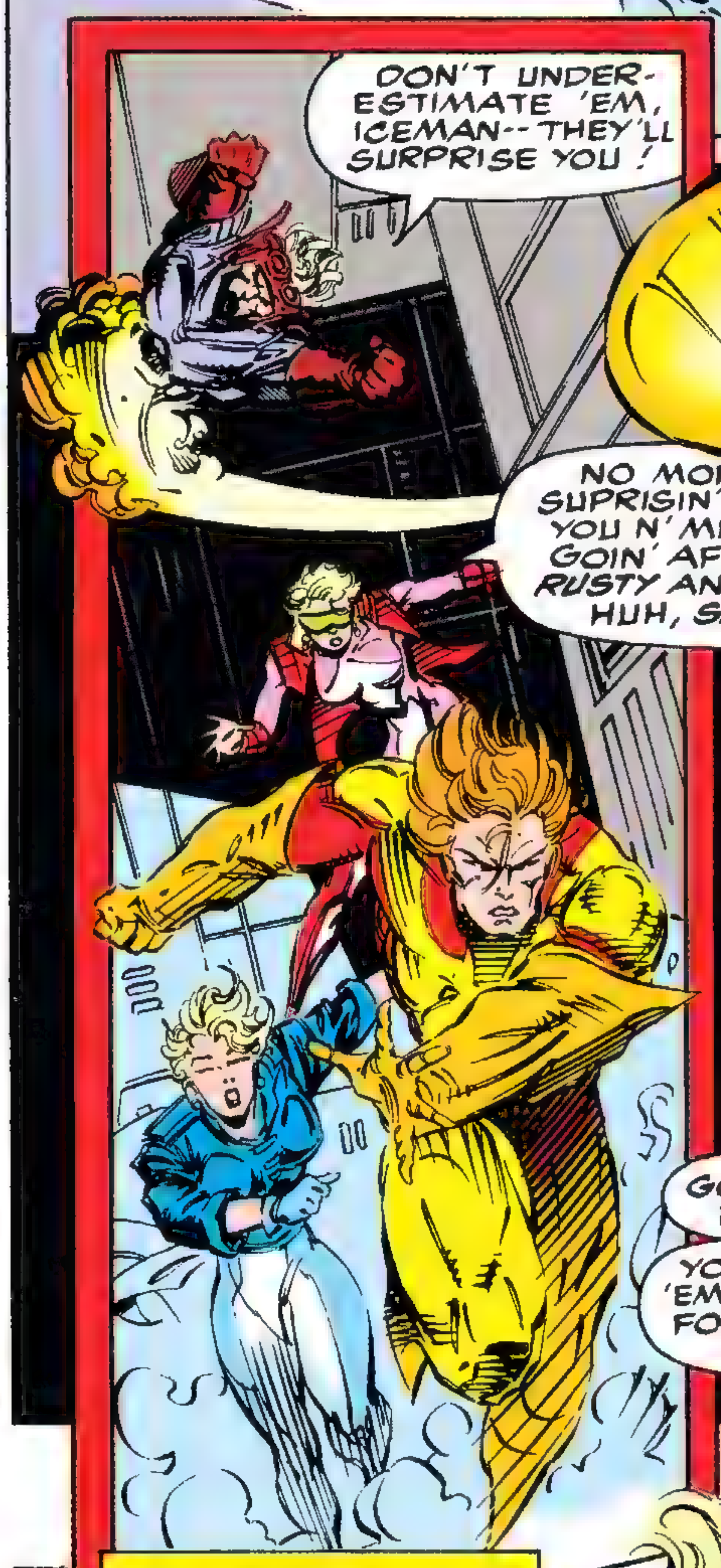


THUMBELINA
AND SLAB
ARE IN THE
FREEZER.

WITHOUT
STRYFE TO
COORDINATE
THEM--

--OR THAT
ZERO CHARACTER
TO TELEPORT
THEM--

-- THESE FEEBS
ARE PRETTY EASY
PICKINGS.



DON'T UNDER-
ESTIMATE 'EM,
ICEMAN-- THEY'LL
SURPRISE YOU!

NO MORE
SUPRISIN' THAN
YOU N' ME
GOIN' AFTER
RUSTY AN' SKIDS,*
HUH, SAM?



CHEEZ! I
REALLY DON'T
WANNA DO THIS--
THEY USED'TA
BE BUDS...!

RUSTY--
IT'S ME--

--IT'S
SAM!

YOU
GOTTA LOT,
O' EXPLAININ'
TA DO!

GOOD WORK,
BOOMER!

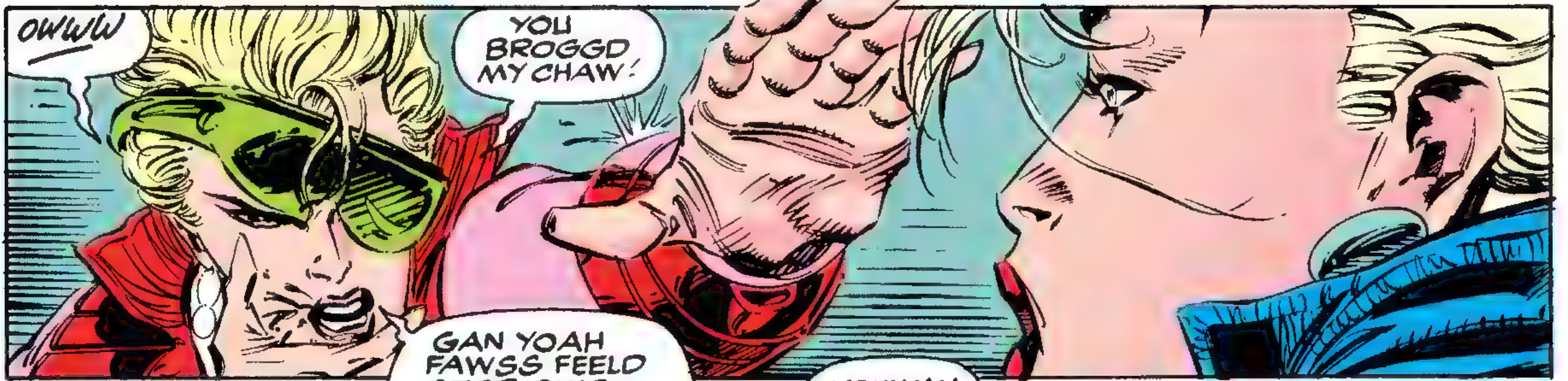
YOU SLOWED
'EM DOWN ENOUGH
FOR ME TA CATCH
UP T'EM!

*EX-MEMBERS OF THE OLD
NEW MUTANTS TEAM -- B.H.



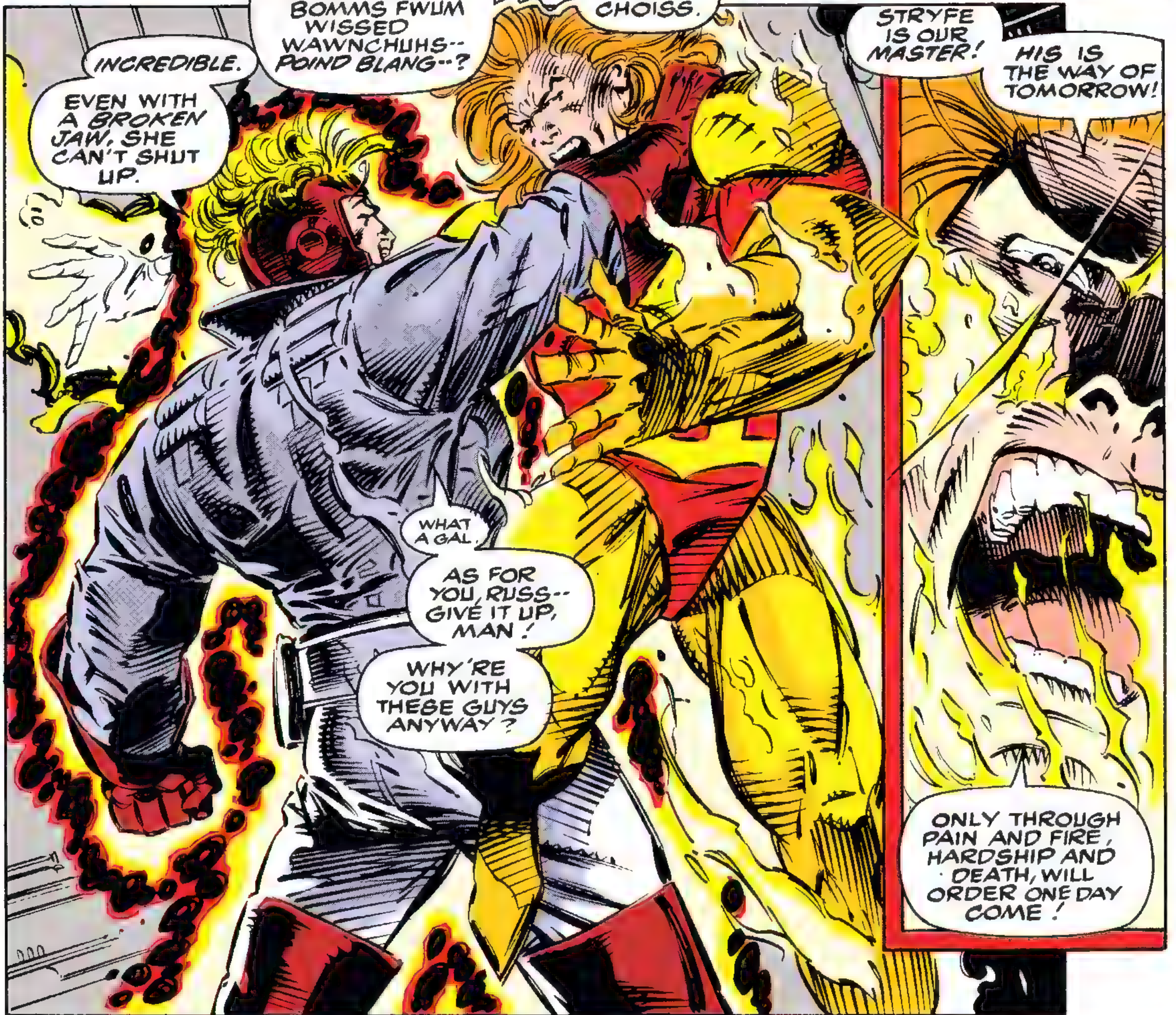
SKIDS--WE'LL
HELP YOU--

KRAKT



OWWW

YOU BROGGD MY CHAW!



INCREDIBLE.

EVEN WITH A BROKEN JAW, SHE CAN'T SHUT UP.

GAN YOAH FAWSS FEELD STOB DIME-BOMMS FWUM WISSED WAWNCHUHS--POIND BLANG--?

YOUWAH CHOISS.

STRYFE IS OUR MASTER!

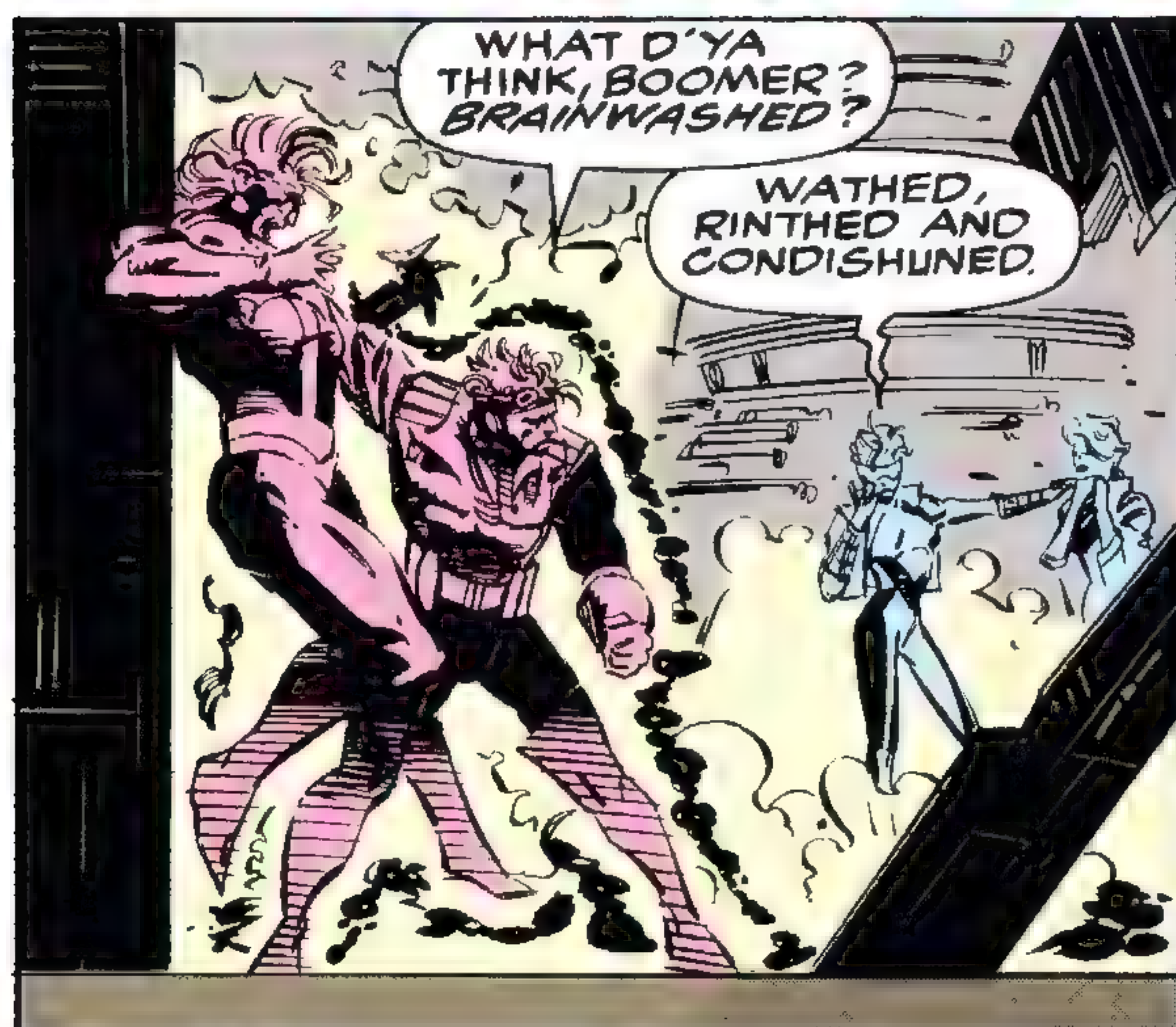
HIS IS THE WAY OF TOMORROW!

WHAT A GAL.

AS FOR YOU, RUSS--GIVE IT UP, MAN!

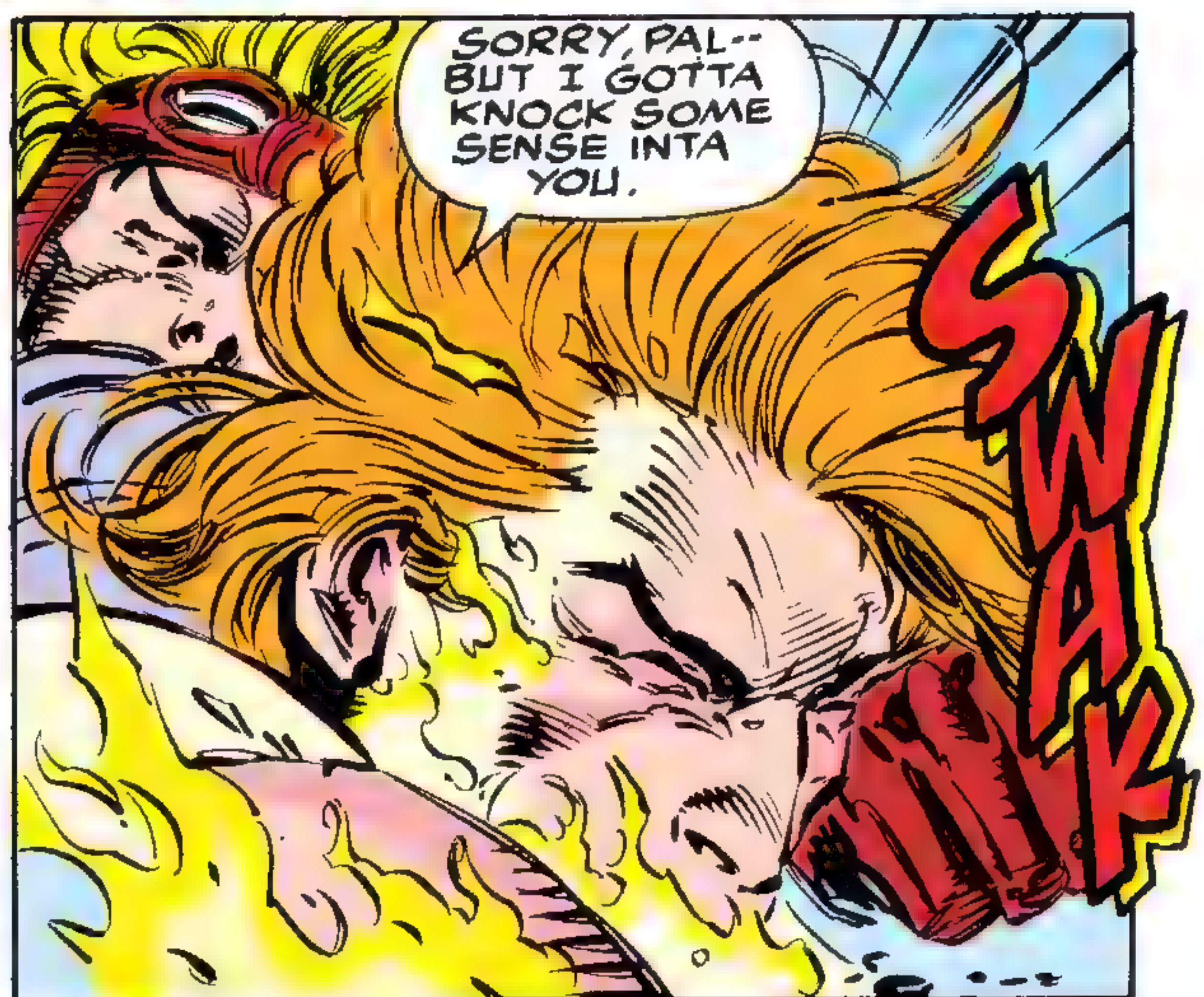
WHY'RE YOU WITH THESE GUYS ANYWAY?

ONLY THROUGH PAIN AND FIRE, HARDSHIP AND DEATH, WILL ORDER ONE DAY COME!



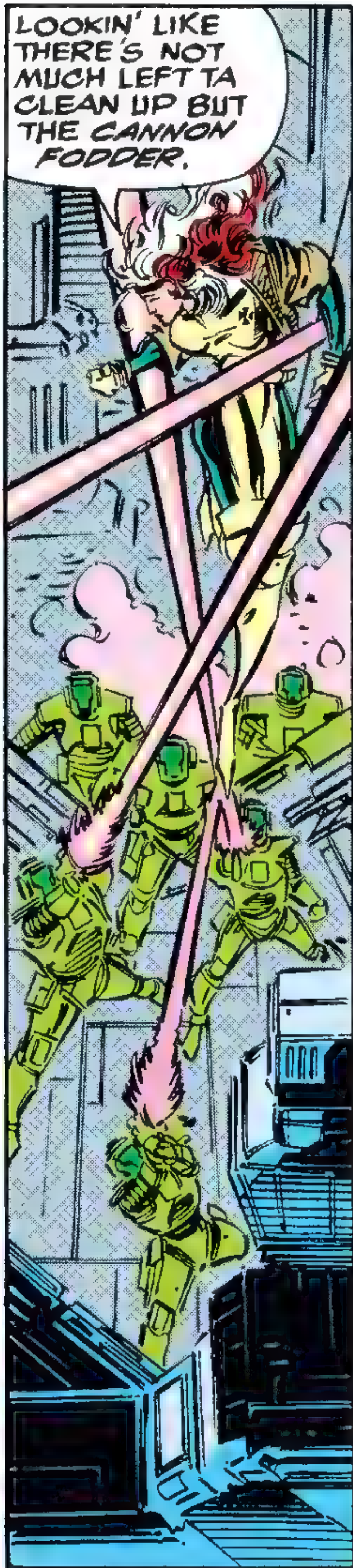
WHAT D'YA THINK, BOOMER? BRAINWASHED?

WATHED, RINTHED AND CONDISHUNED.

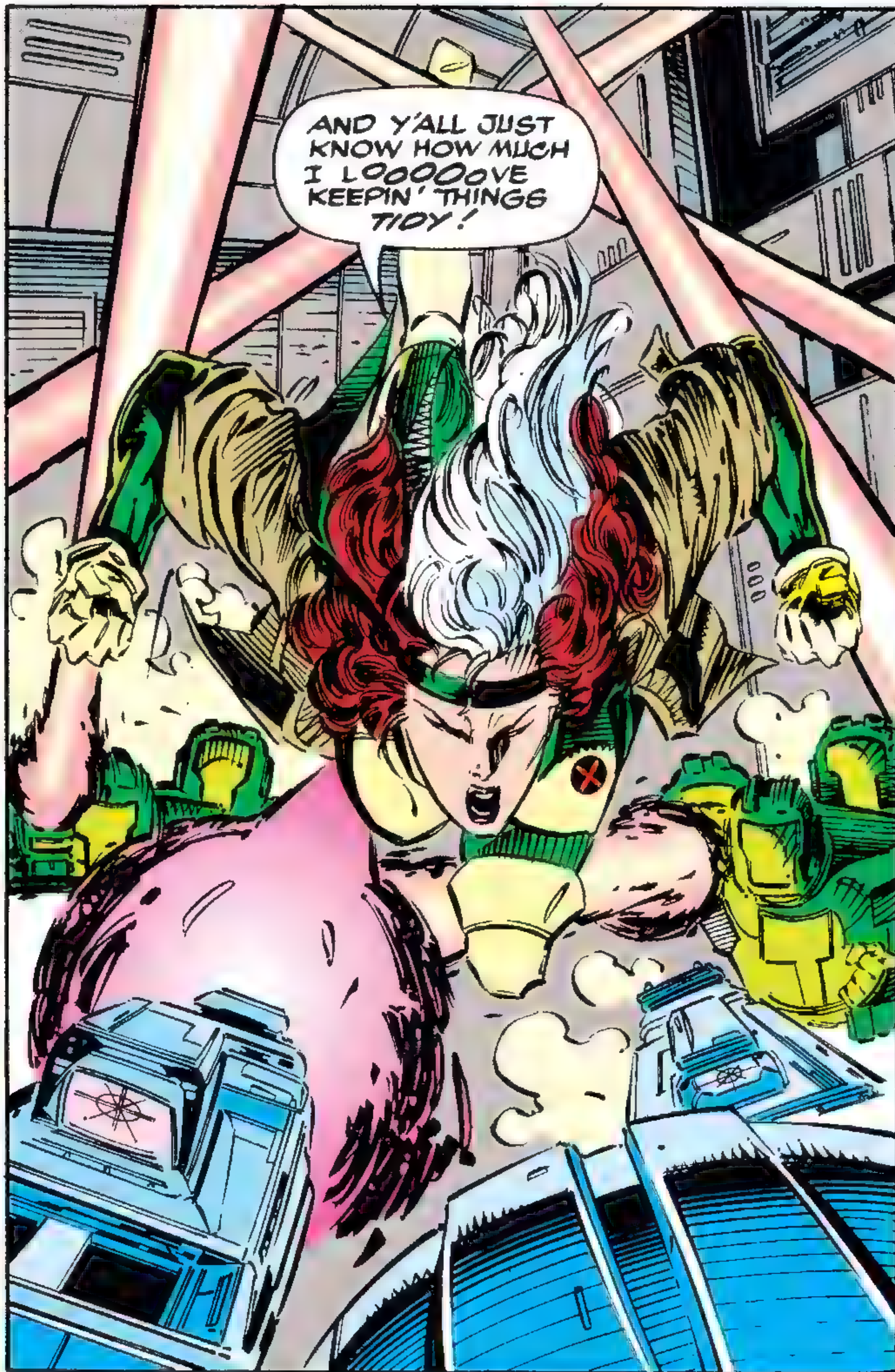


SORRY, PAL-- BUT I GOTTA KNOCK SOME SENSE INTA YOU.

SWAK



LOOKIN' LIKE THERE'S NOT MUCH LEFT TO CLEAN UP BUT THE CANNON FODDER.



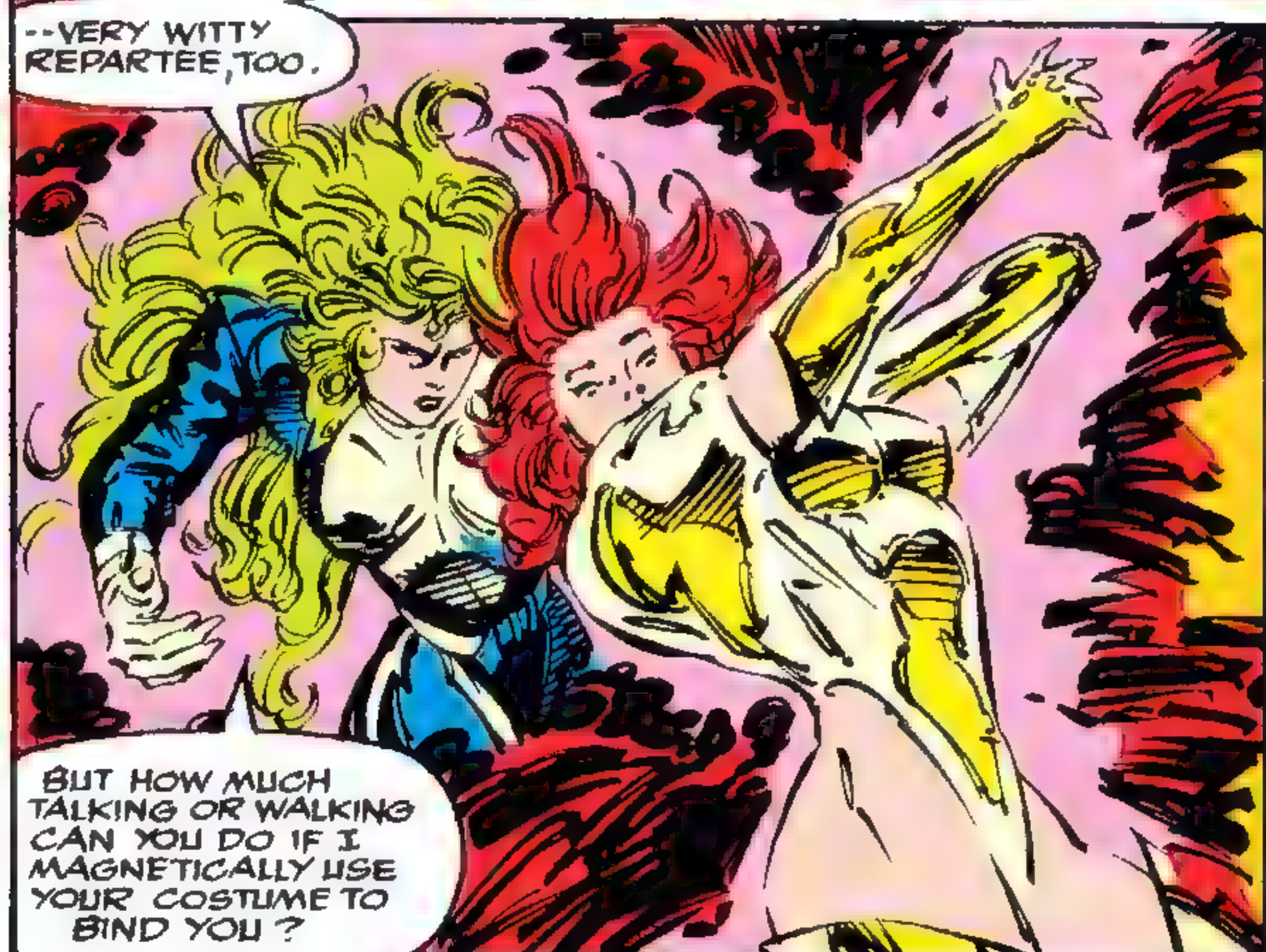
AND Y'ALL JUST KNOW HOW MUCH I LOOOOOVE KEEPIN' THINGS TIDY!



GOOD, X-MAN! BECAUSE THE FEELING IS MUTUAL!
HOW D'YOU FEEL ABOUT A CONCENTRATED LIGHT BLAST?

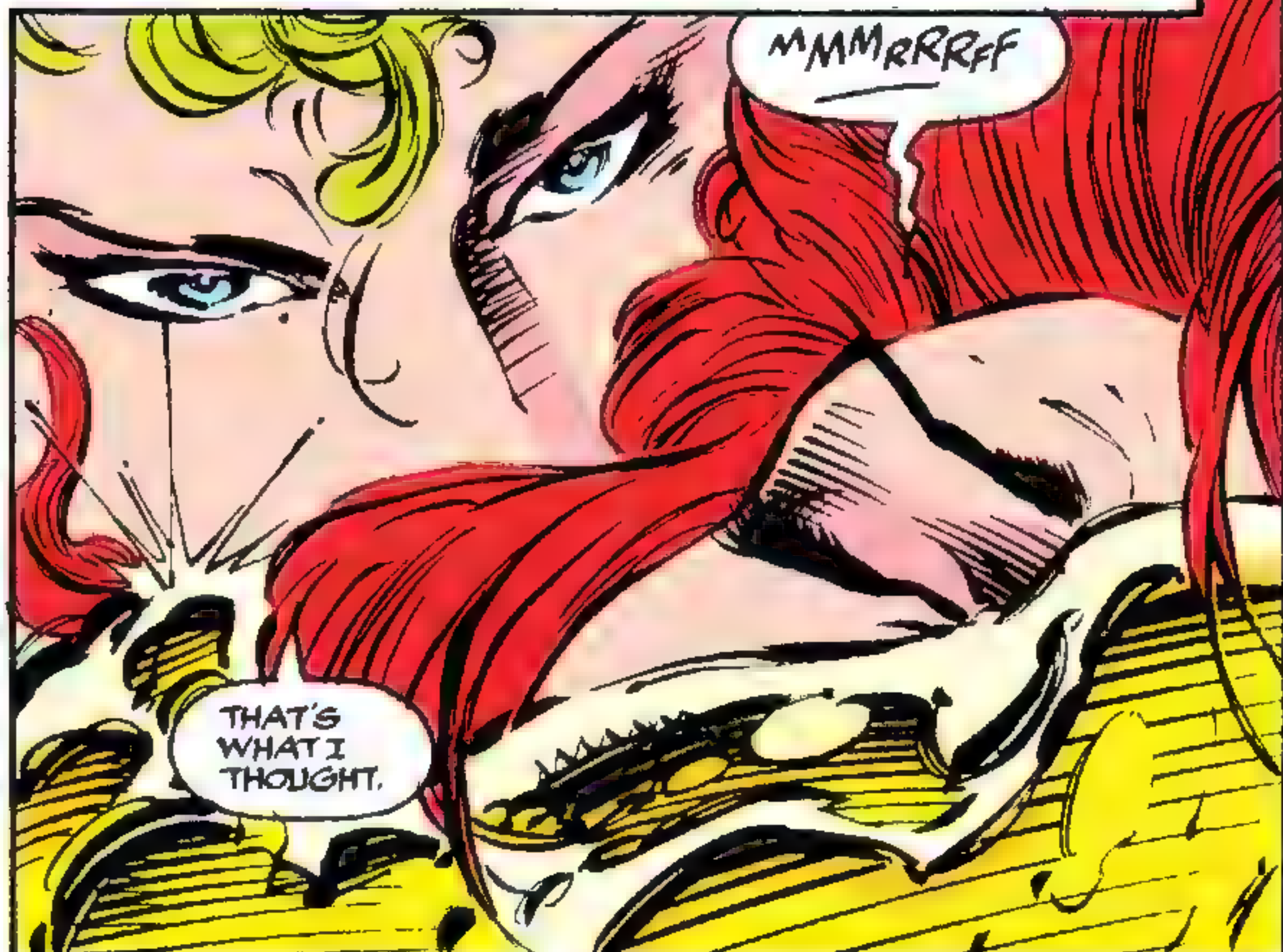


VERY SNEAKY, STROBE. BLINDING ROGUE THAT WAY--



--VERY WITTY REPORTEEE, TOO.

BUT HOW MUCH TALKING OR WALKING CAN YOU DO IF I MAGNETICALLY USE YOUR COSTUME TO BIND YOU?



MMMRRRF

THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT.

HOW ARE WE DOING, BOBBY?

I'M FINE, WARREN.

BUT WE'RE GONNA TALK LATER, COOL?

ALL DONE?

FINISHED. THE MUTANT LIBERATION FRONT CAN NO LONGER BE CONSIDERED A THREAT.

THE QUESTION, AFTER THE ACCIDENT YOU HAD WITH KAMIKAZE, IS--

--HOW ARE **YOU** DOING?

LIKE YOU SAID-- IT WAS AN ACCIDENT.

I'LL DEAL WITH IT.

AND ONLY BECAUSE WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF A FIGHT--

--WILL I LET YOU DROP THE SUBJECT THAT EASILY, BUD.

WE SHOULD HAVE DONE THIS MONTHS AGO.

YOU SHOULD HAVE ASKED, KID.

WHAT NOW, ORORO?

NOW, WE WILL TALK TO THESE TERRORISTS AND WE WILL LISTEN TO THEIR WORDS--

--AND FOR THEIR SALES, AS WELL AS OURS, WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY--

--HAD BEST HELP US FIND **STRYFE!**

MEANWHILE, IN THE WINDSWEEP CANADIAN PROVINCE OF NEW-FOUNDLAND--

-- FIVE MILES NORTH OF ST. JOHN'S--

-- THE COASTLINE...
HARD, TIMELESS,
UNFORGIVING--

-- PLAYS HOST TO A
TRIO OF MEN WHO--
EXCEPT FOR THEIR
CURRENT SITUATION--

-- WOULD FIT QUITE
WELL INTO THE
LANDSCAPE.

WOLVERINE,
I THOUGHT
YOU SAID
THEY WOULD
NOT HAVE
SUFFICIENT
PURSUIT
CAPABILI-
TIES?

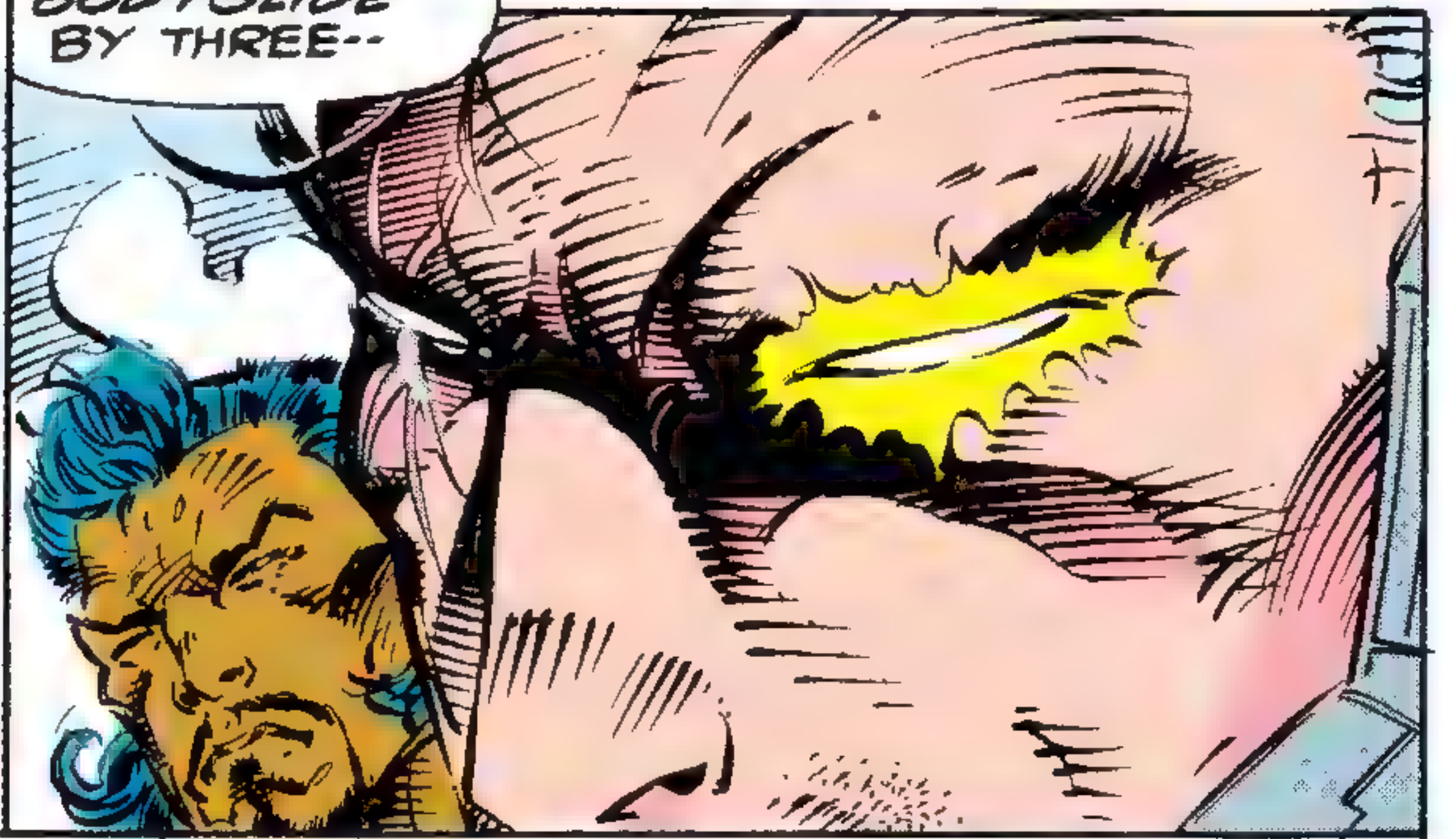
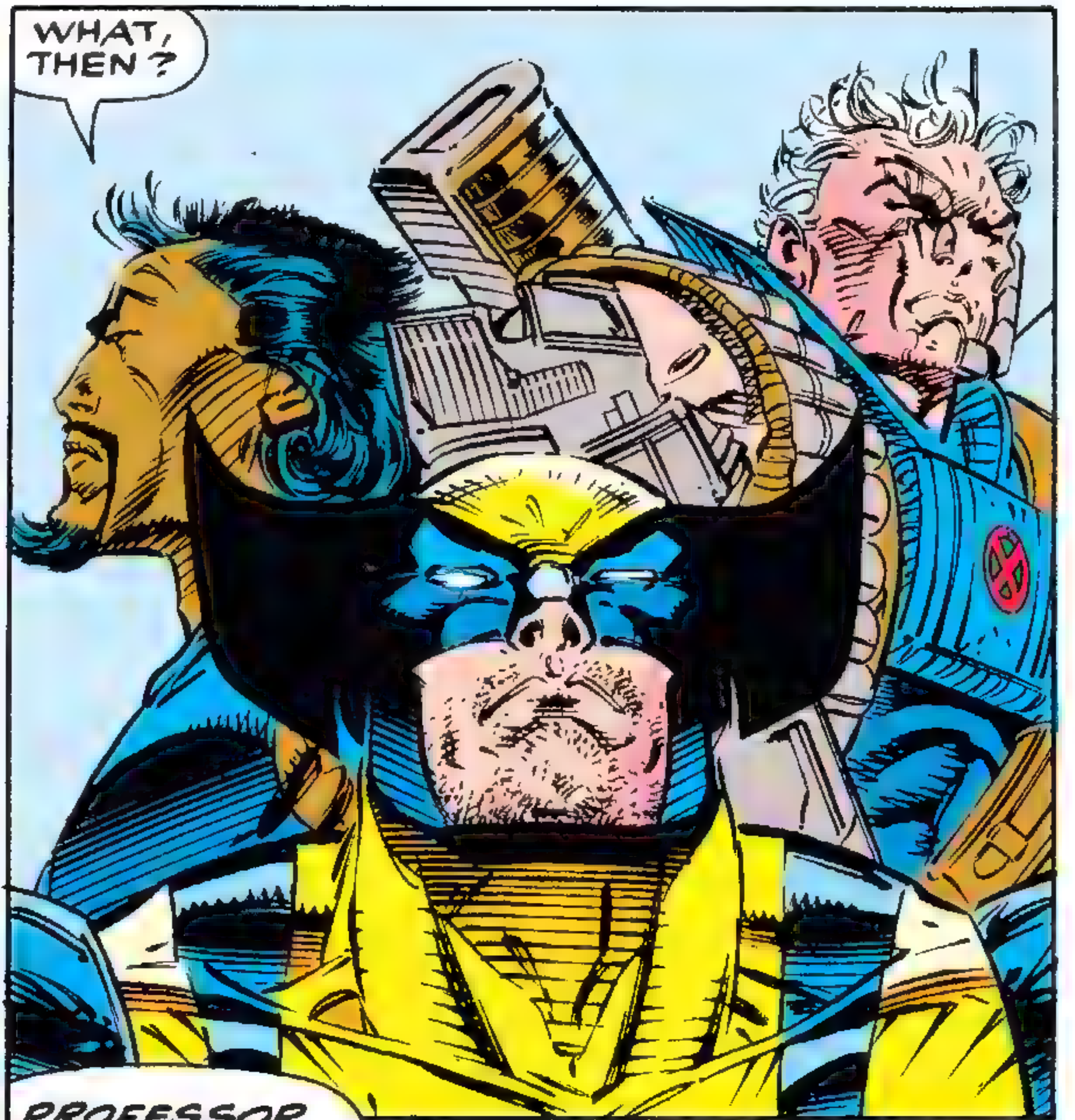
THAT'S EXACTLY
WHAT I SAID,
BISHOP.

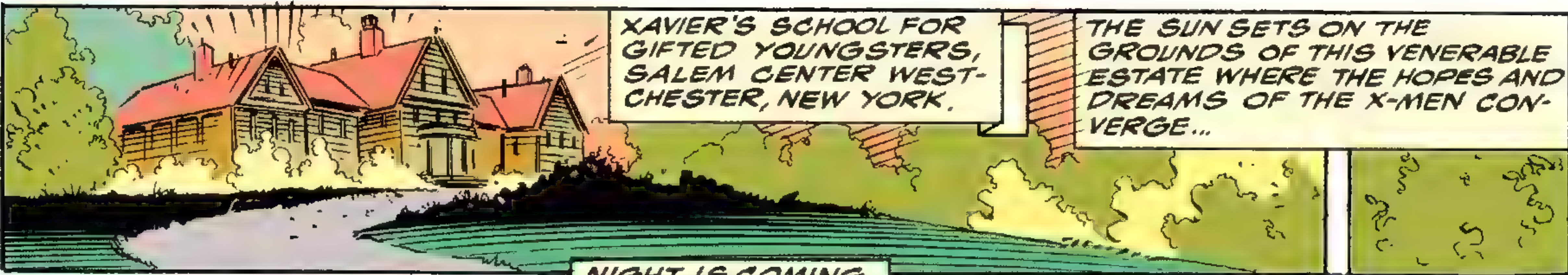
WHAT
DO YOU
THINK
NOW?

I THINK
I WAS WRONG.

OBVIOUSLY,
DEPARTMENT K'S
INCREASED THEIR
FINANCING
SINCE THEY
BEGAN HUNTING
ME DOWN.



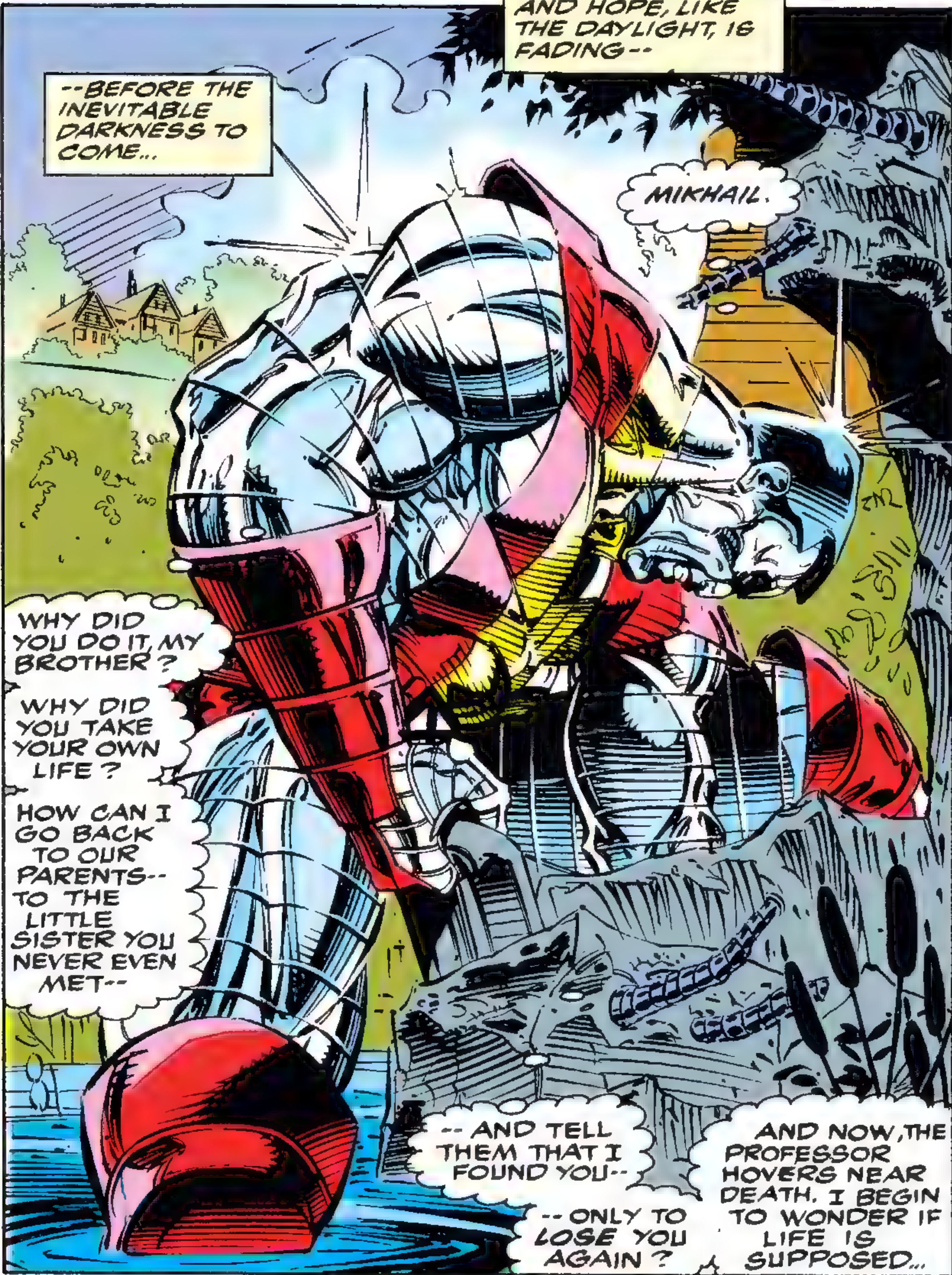




XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS, SALEM CENTER WEST-CHESTER, NEW YORK.

THE SUN SETS ON THE GROUNDS OF THIS VENERABLE ESTATE WHERE THE HOPES AND DREAMS OF THE X-MEN CONVERGE...

NIGHT IS COMING. AND HOPE, LIKE THE DAYLIGHT, IS FADING--



--BEFORE THE INEVITABLE DARKNESS TO COME--

MIKHAIL.

WHY DID YOU DO IT, MY BROTHER?

WHY DID YOU TAKE YOUR OWN LIFE?

HOW CAN I GO BACK TO OUR PARENTS-- TO THE LITTLE SISTER YOU NEVER EVEN MET--

-- AND TELL THEM THAT I FOUND YOU--

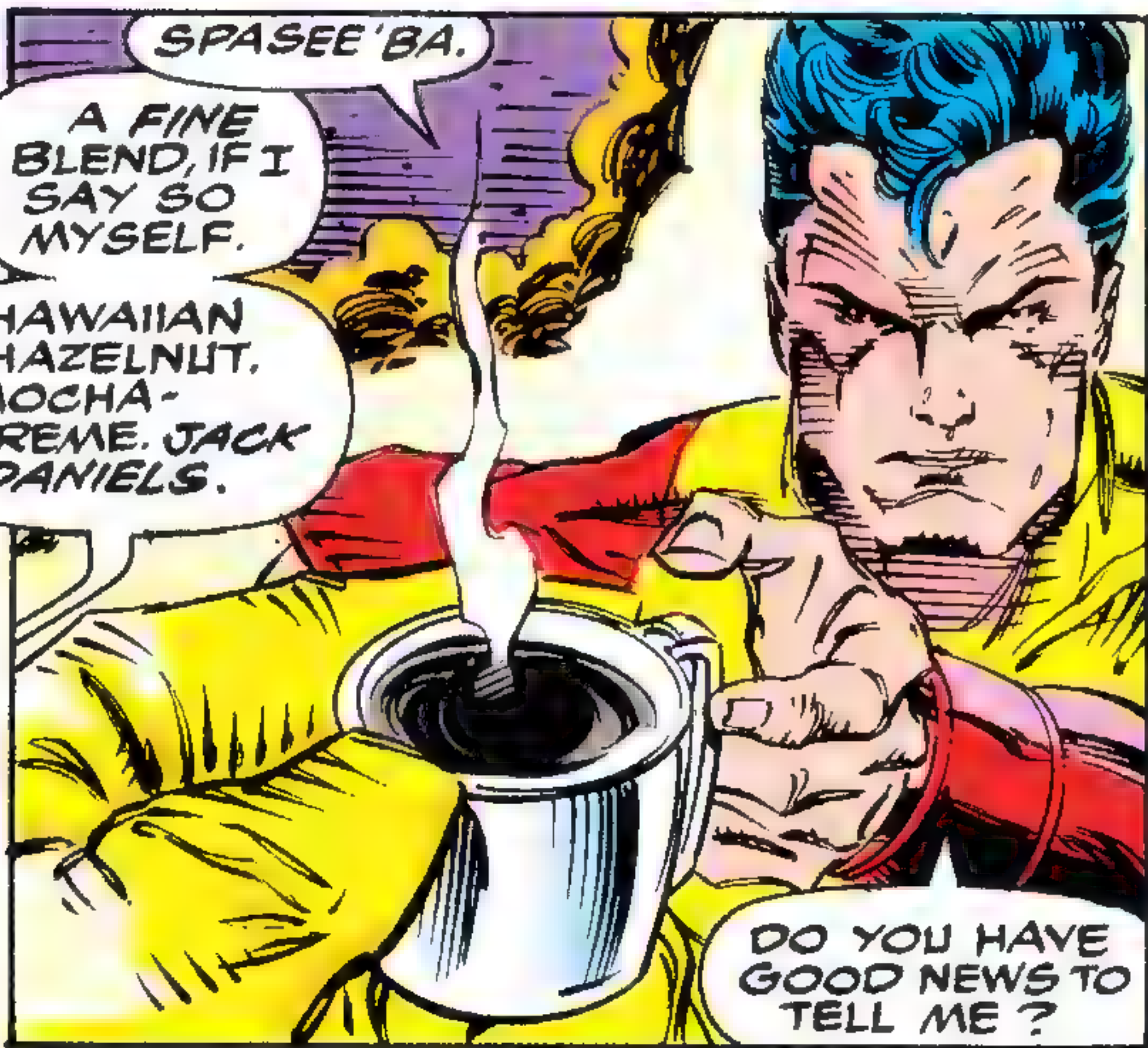
-- ONLY TO LOSE YOU AGAIN?

AND NOW, THE PROFESSOR HOVERS NEAR DEATH. I BEGIN TO WONDER IF LIFE IS SUPPOSED...



HOW'S THE LANDSCAPING GOING, PETER?

WANT SOME COFFEE?

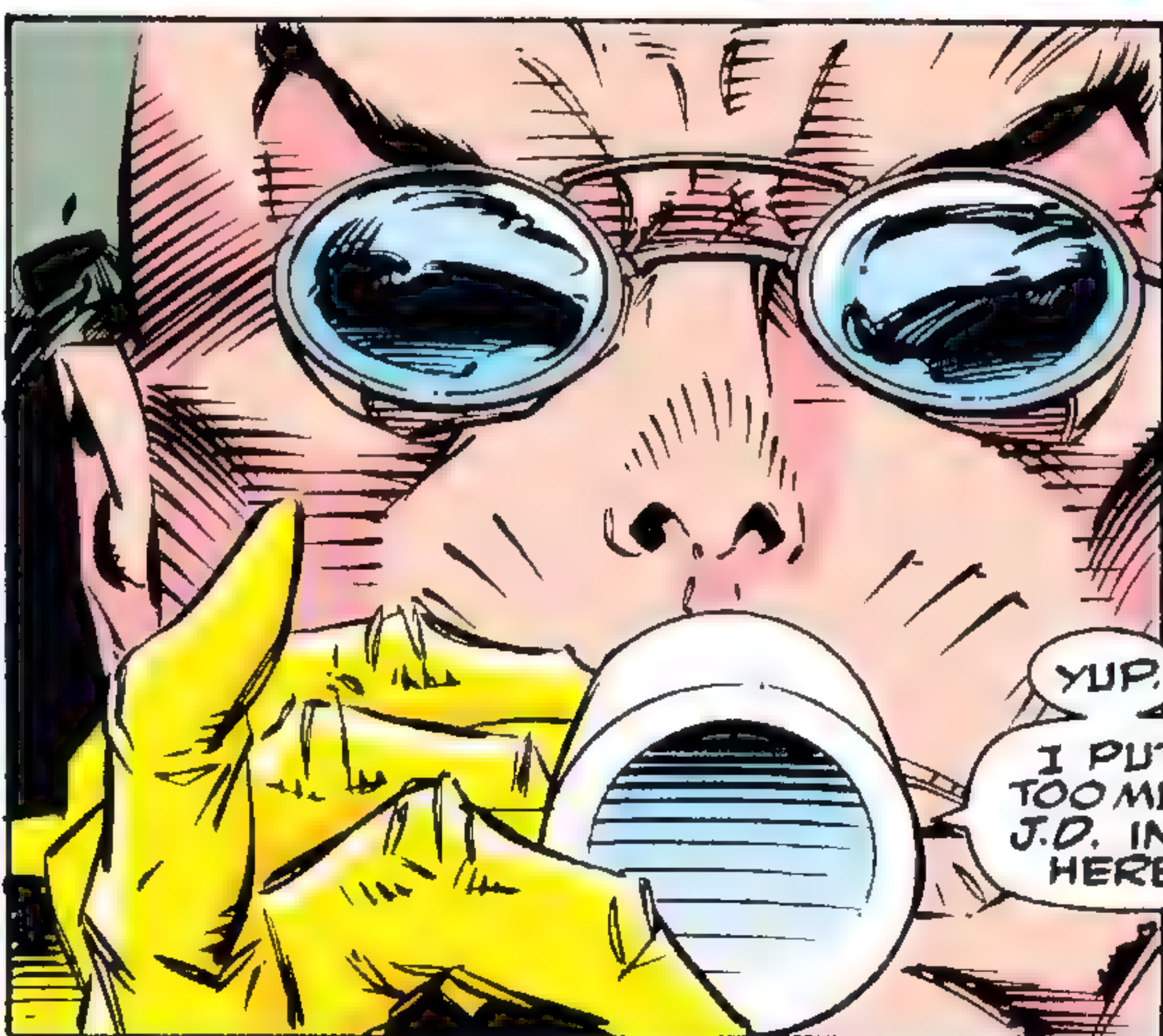


SPASEE'BA.

A FINE BLEND, IF I SAY SO MYSELF.

HAWAIIAN HAZELNUT, MOCHA-CREME, JACK DANIELS.

DO YOU HAVE GOOD NEWS TO TELL ME?



YUP.

I PUT TOO MUCH J.D. IN HERE.

"AS FOR CHUCK'S
CONDITION, THERE'S
NO CHANGE. HE'S NO
WORSE THAN HE WAS
BEFORE--"

UNFORTUNATELY,
MOIRA, HE'S NO
BETTER, EITHER!

I KNOW, HANK,
BUT YE CANNA
BE BLAMIN'
YOORSELF F'R
THAT, NOW.

T'WAS MORE
IMPORANT YE
JOIN YER MATES
LOOKIN' F'R
SCOTT AN' JEANNIE,
THAN BANGIN'
YOOR HEAD HERE.

I WONDER
IF IT WAS,
MOIRA.

I WONDER IF
THERE WASN'T
MORE I COULD
DO FOR CHARLES--

-- FOR THE WHOLE
WORLD IF I MAY
BE SO BOLD --

-- IF I WERE TO CONCENTRATE
MORE ON MY TALENTS IN
BIOGENETICS AND LESS ON
GALLIVANTING AROUND AS AN X-MAN.

LOOK AT THIS--THIS
THING CHARLES HAS BEEN
INFECTED WITH!

EVERY ANTIGEN
CONTAGION WE
INTRODUCE
INTO HIS BODY--

-- IS IMMEDIATELY
CO-OPTED INTO
THIS TECHNO-
ORGANIC MESH
COVERING HIS
BODY.

I'VE NEVER SEEN
A PATHOGEN
WORK THIS WAY!
NEVER!

HOW ARE WE
SUPPOSED TO
FIGHT IT?

PERHAPS WE CANNA,
HANK? PERHAPS
WE'RE ALL HOPIN'
FOR A BLESSED
MIRACLE.

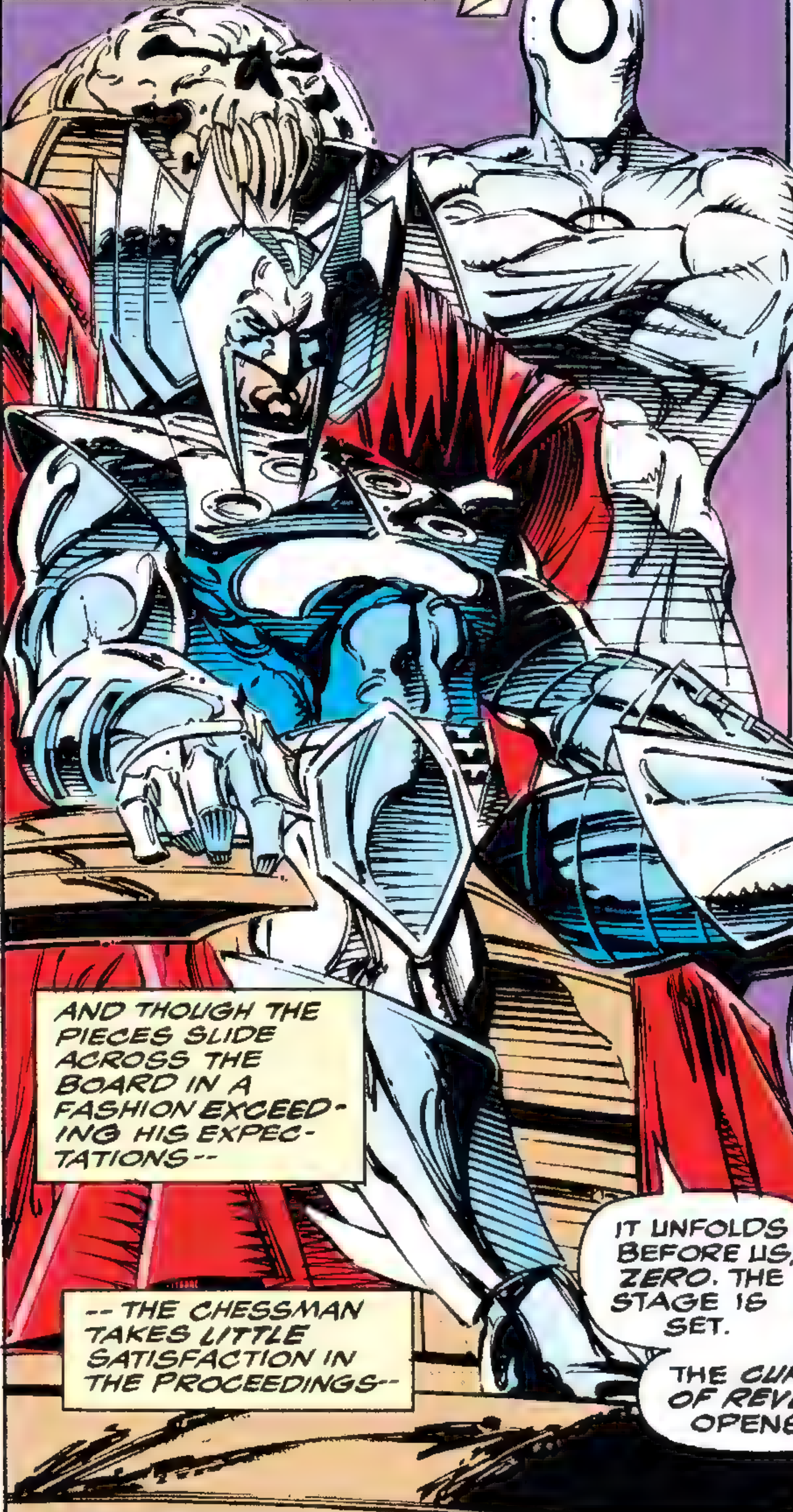
ARE YOU SAYING
WE SHOULD JUST
GIVE UP, DR.
MACTAGGERT?

THAT THE
FIGHT IS
OVER?

I'M SAYIN' THAT
MAYBE, HEAVEN
HELP US, THE
FIGHT WAS OVER--

-- THE SECOND
CHARLES WAS
SHOT...

SOMEWHERE, THE ENIGMATIC
MAN CALLED STRYFE WATCHES
THE GAME BEING PLAYED.



AND THOUGH THE
PIECES SLIDE
ACROSS THE
BOARD IN A
FASHION EXCEED-
ING HIS EXPECT-
TATIONS--

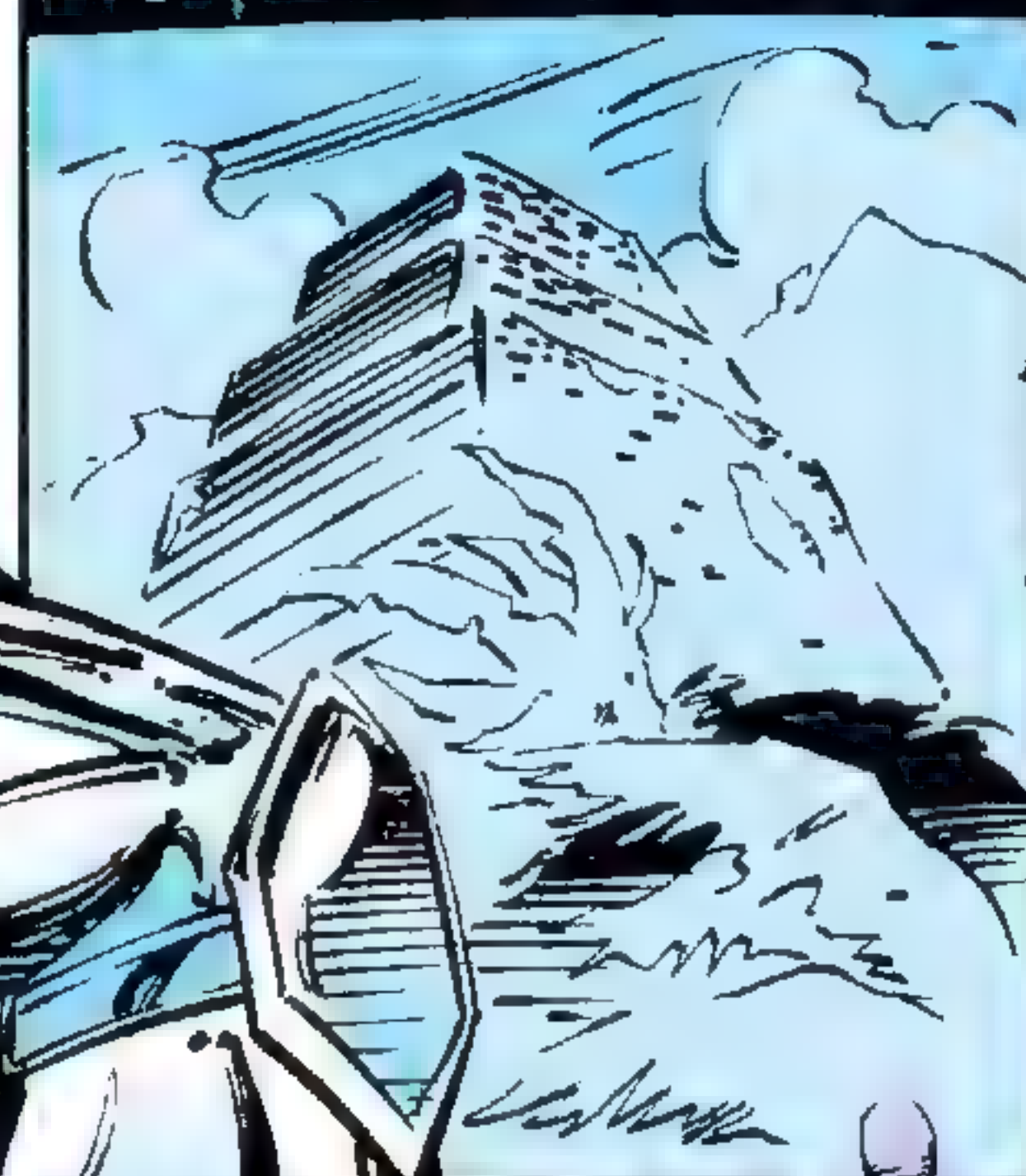
-- THE CHESSMAN
TAKES LITTLE
SATISFACTION IN
THE PROCEEDINGS--

IT UNFOLDS
BEFORE US,
ZERO. THE
STAGE IS
SET.

THE CURTAIN
OF REVENGE
OPENS--

-- ONLY TO
REVEAL THE
THEATER OF
THE ABSURD
BEHIND IT.

MAINTAIN
YOUR VIGIL,
MY SILENT
KNIGHT.



I HAVE MORE...
PERSONAL...
MATTERS TO
ATTEND TO.

BUT WHAT
COULD BE
MORE PER-
SONAL THAN
REVENGE,
YOU ASK?

REDEMPTION,
PERHAPS.

SYNTH-PREP:
WARM MILK--
SUBSTANTATIVE
INFANT
SUPPLEMENT.

BY
TWO.

SWISH

MR. SUMMERS.
MS. GREY.

I HAVE
NEGLECTED
TO FEED
YOU SINCE
YOUR-- VISIT--
BEGAN.

PLEASE--
RISE-- IT
IS TIME
TO FEAST.

ENOUGH, STRYFE.
WE'RE NOT PLAYING
YOUR GAMES!

FWASHOOM

SCOTT--!

I WILL
NOT ABIDE
BY SUCH
TANTRUMS!

IT IS
TIME TO
EAT.

IT IS
GOOD FOR
YOU.

-- CAN'T MOVE--
EVEN MY--

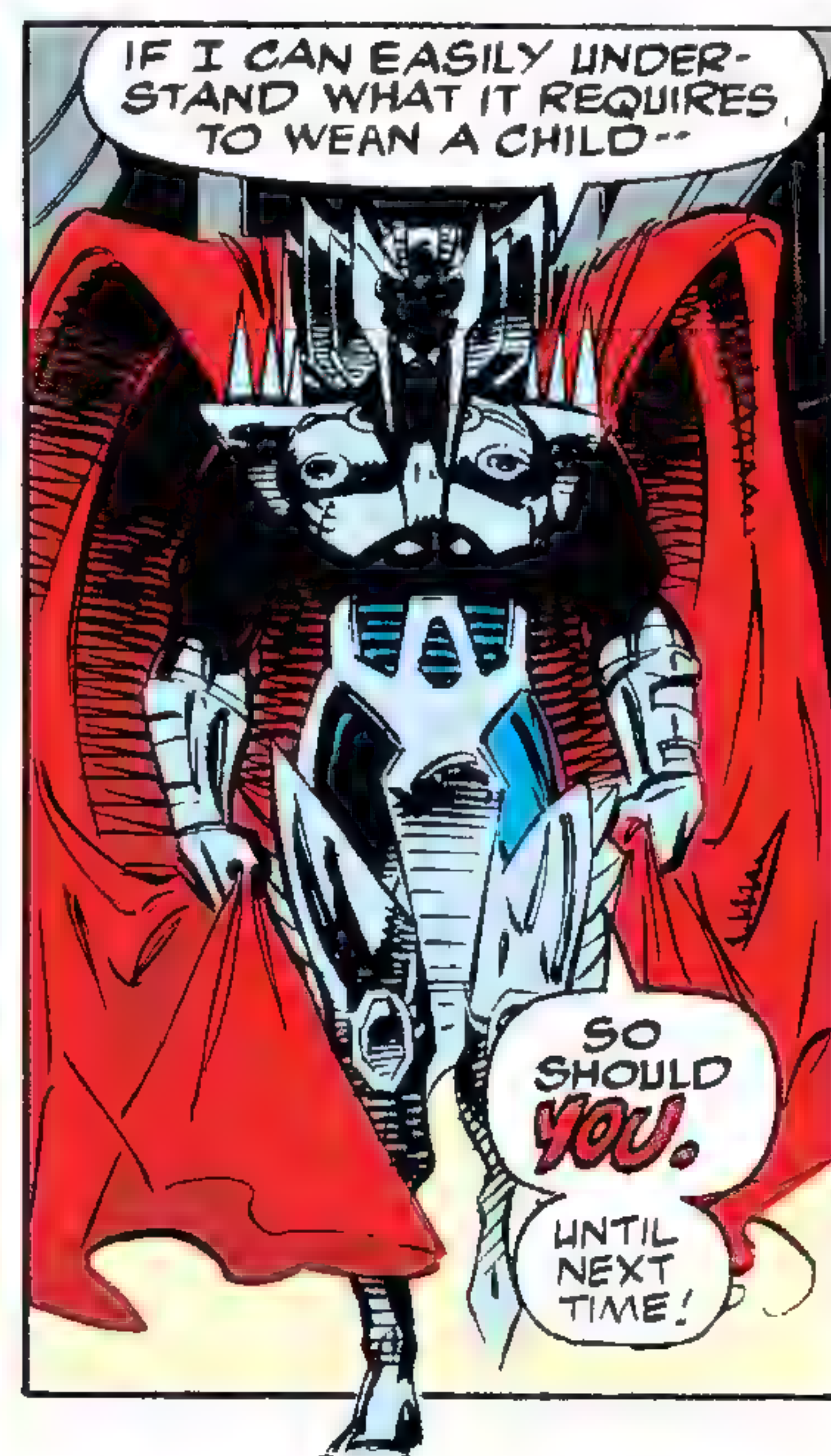
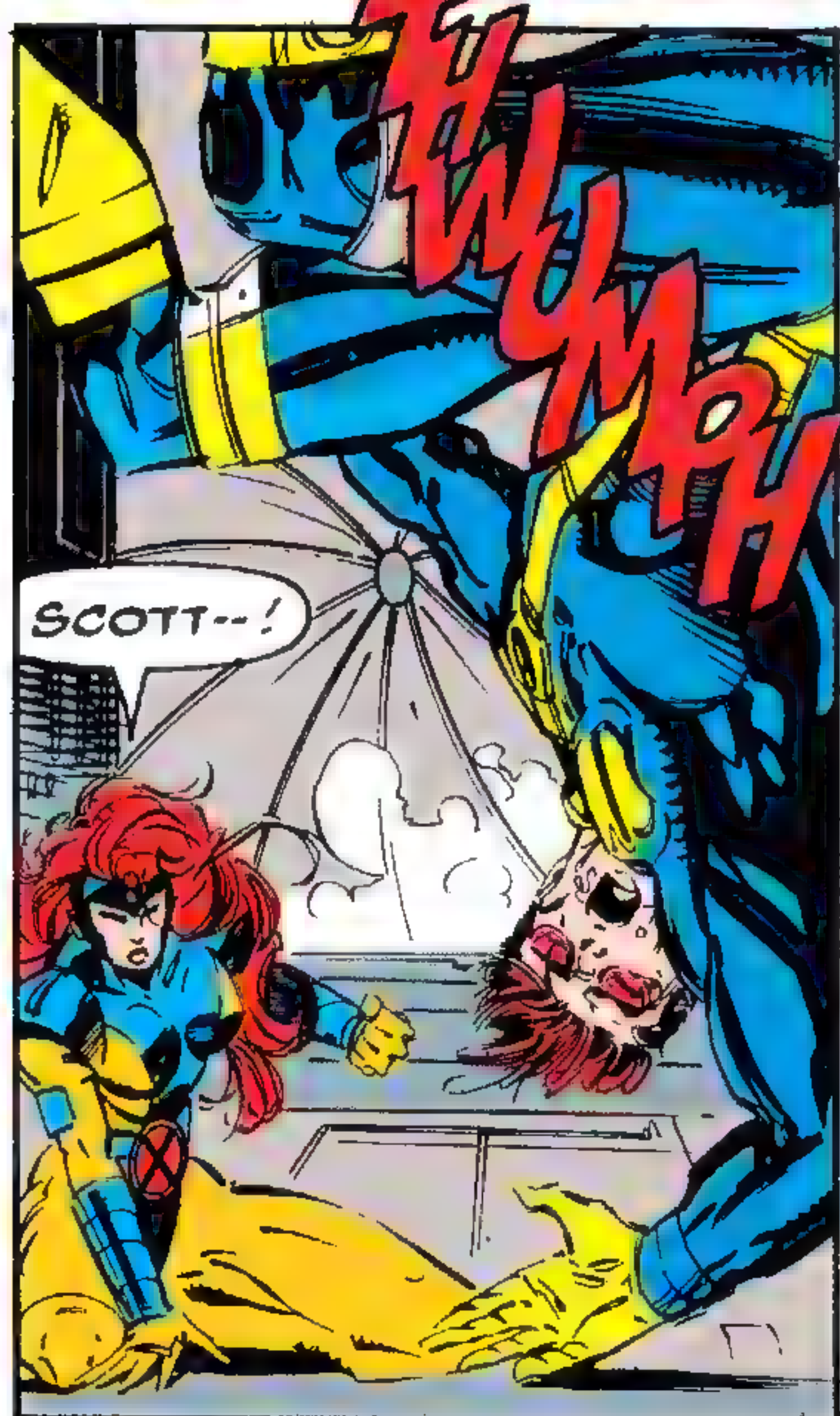
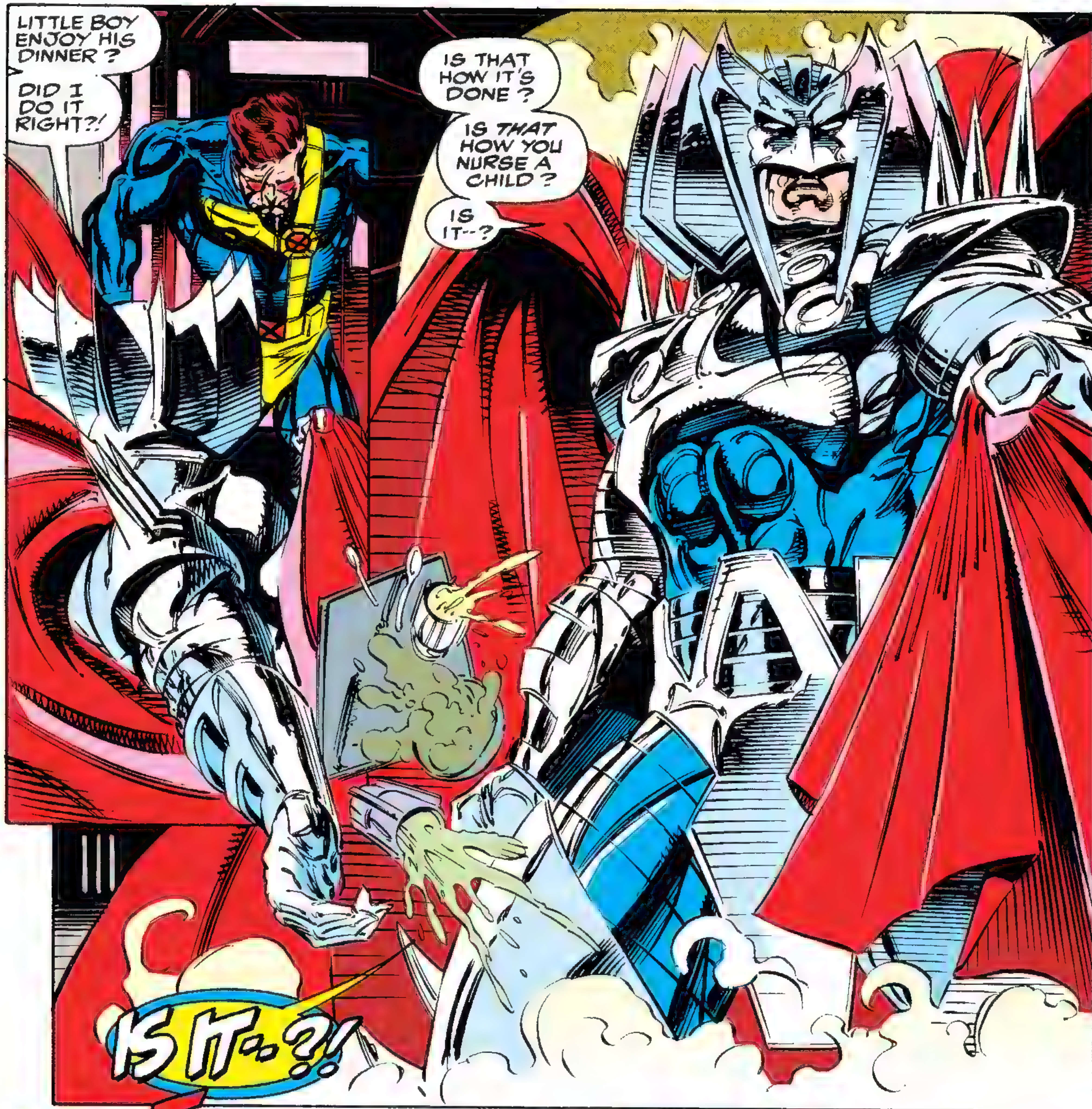
--OPTIC
BEAMS--

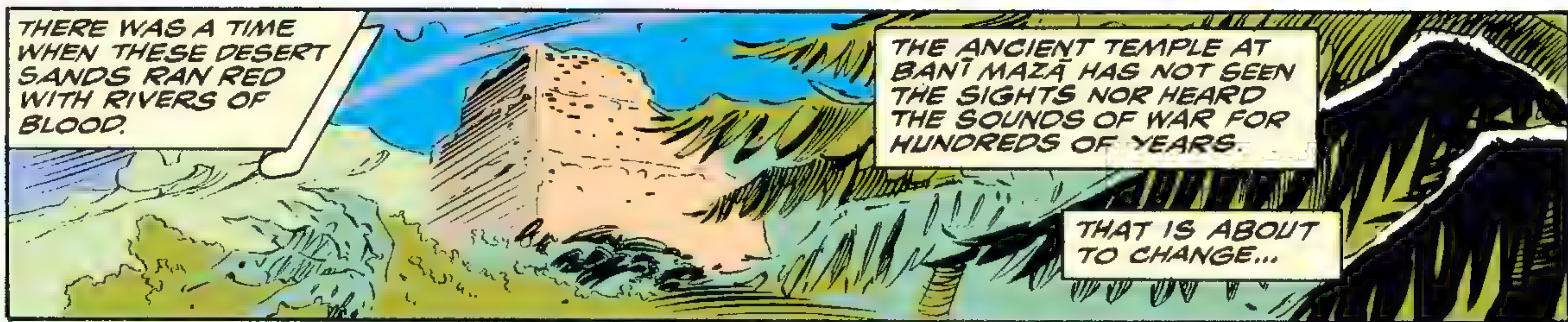
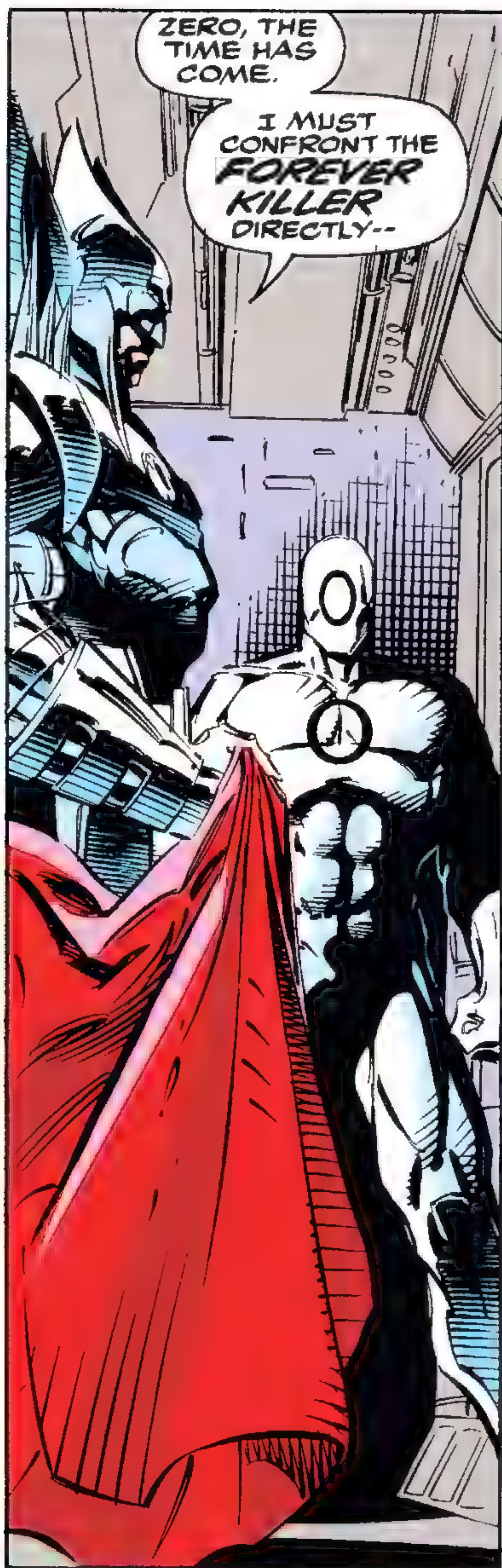
OPEN
WILLIE,
NOW.

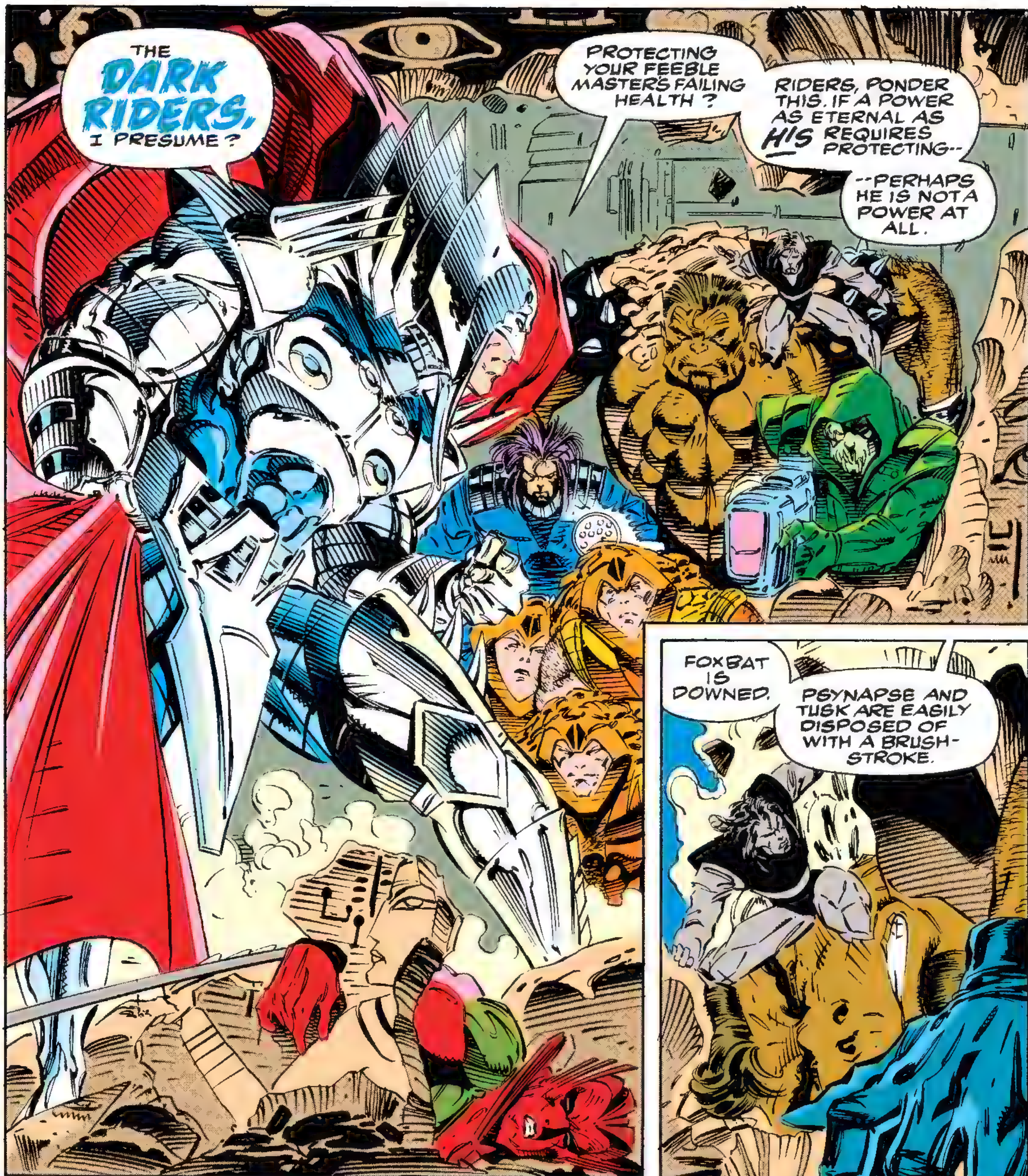
THERE'S
A BOY!

THERE'S A
GOOD
BOY!!

AmRUMPH







THE
**DARK
RIDERS,**
I PRESUME?

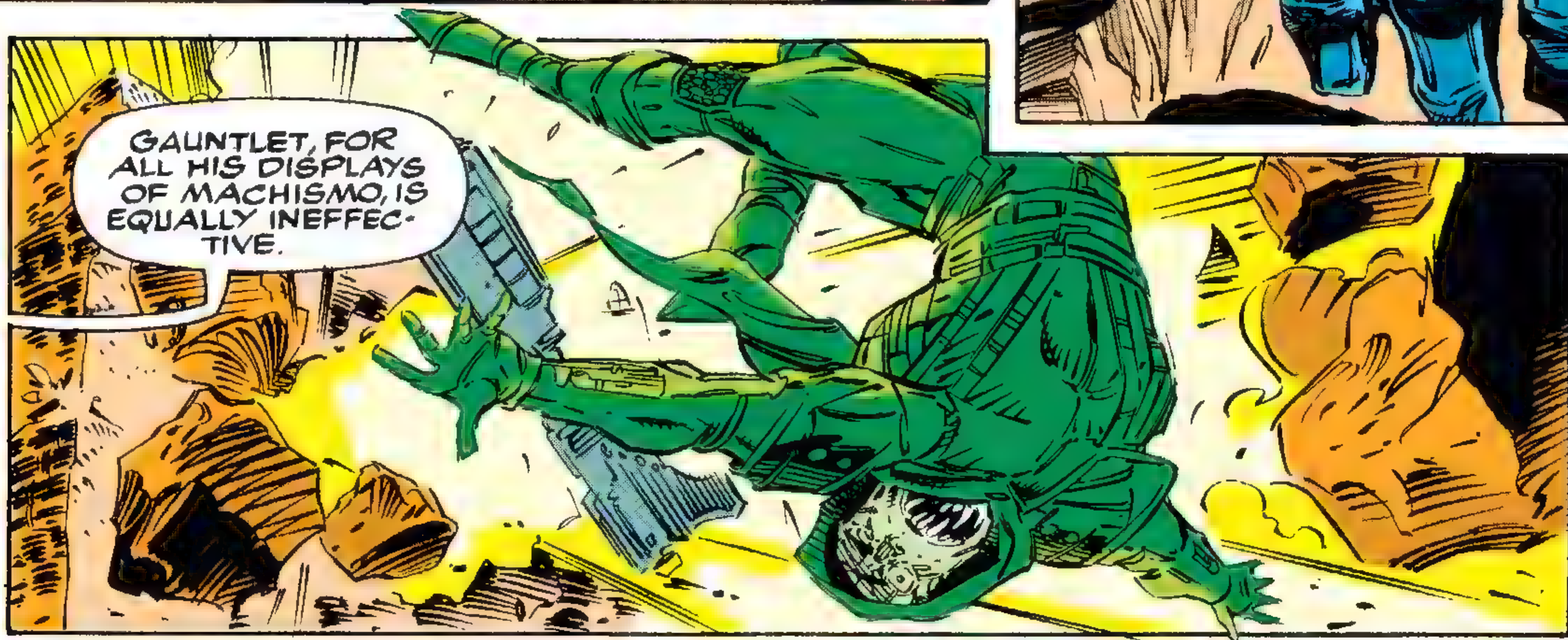
PROTECTING
YOUR FEEBLE
MASTERS FAILING
HEALTH?

RIDERS, PONDER
THIS. IF A POWER
AS ETERNAL AS
HIS REQUIRES
PROTECTING--

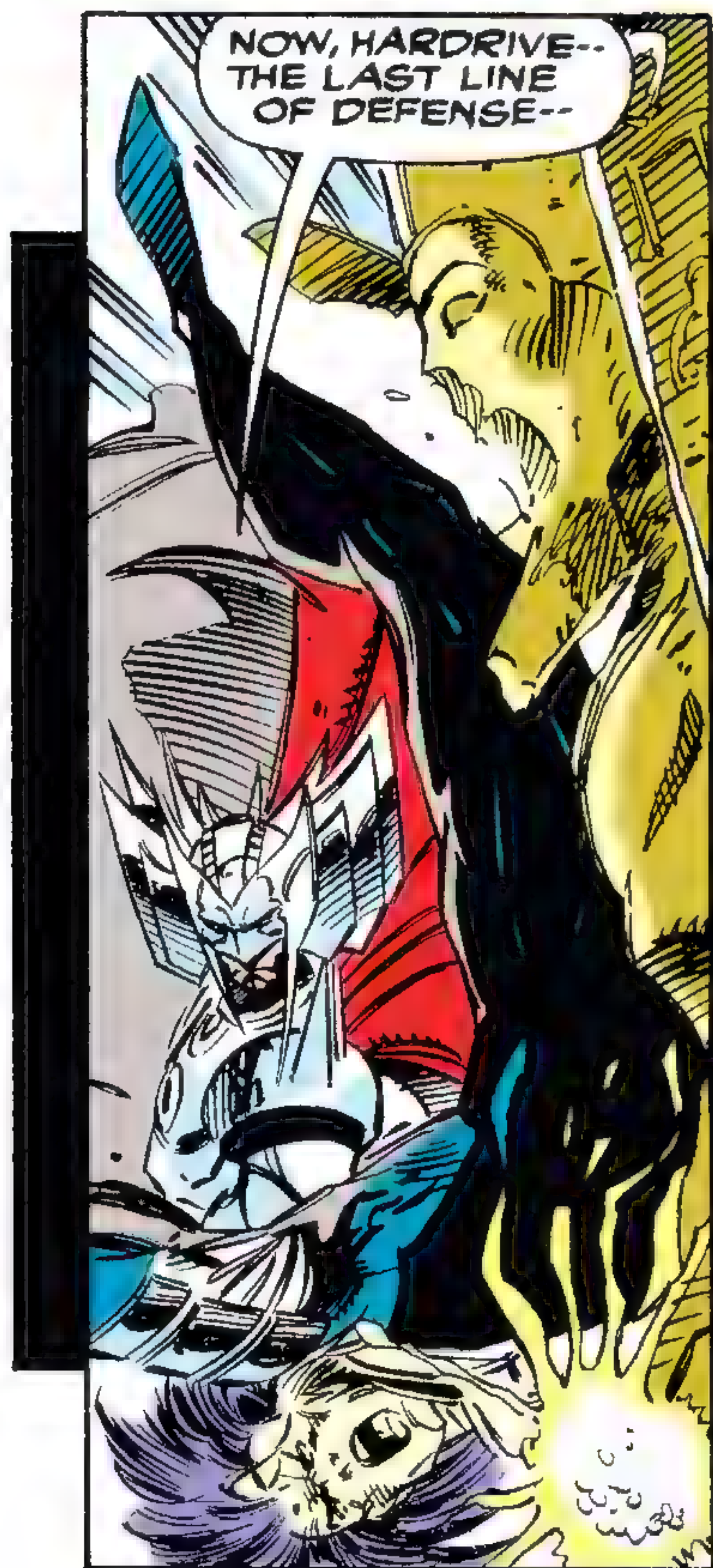
--PERHAPS
HE IS NOT A
POWER AT
ALL.

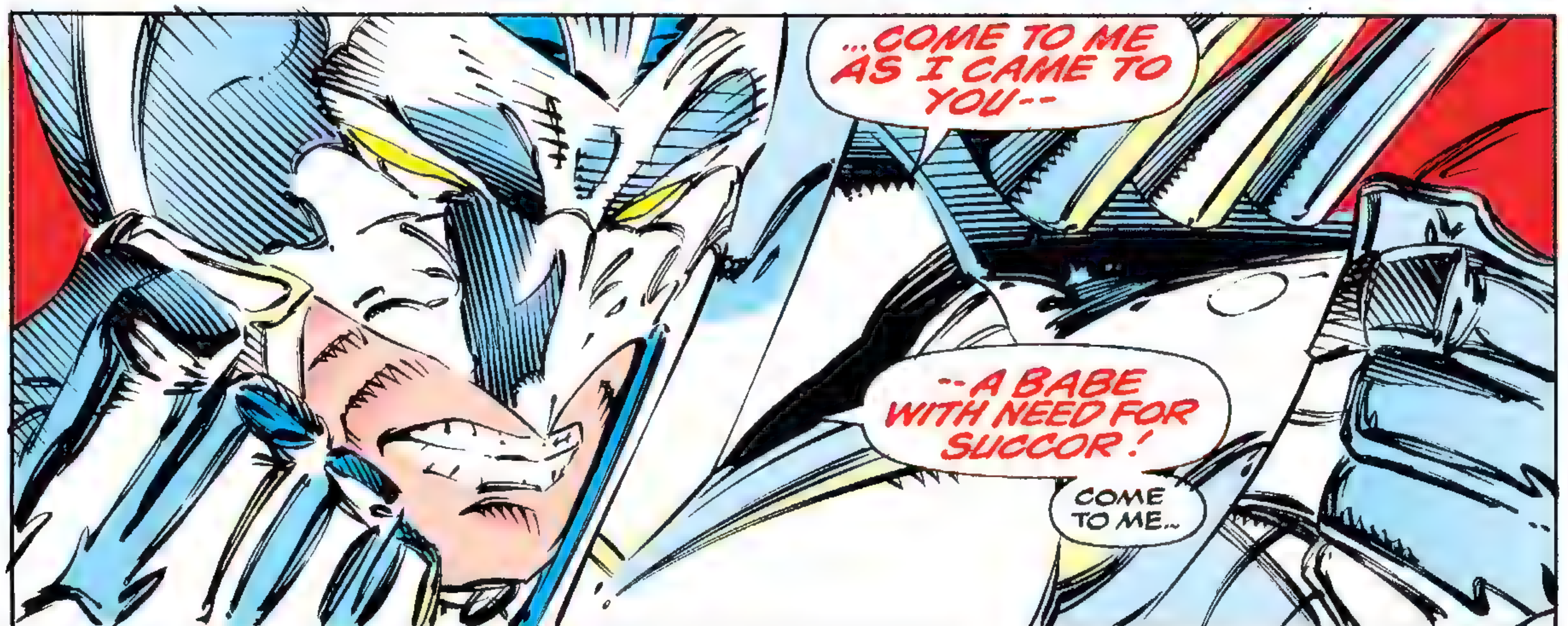
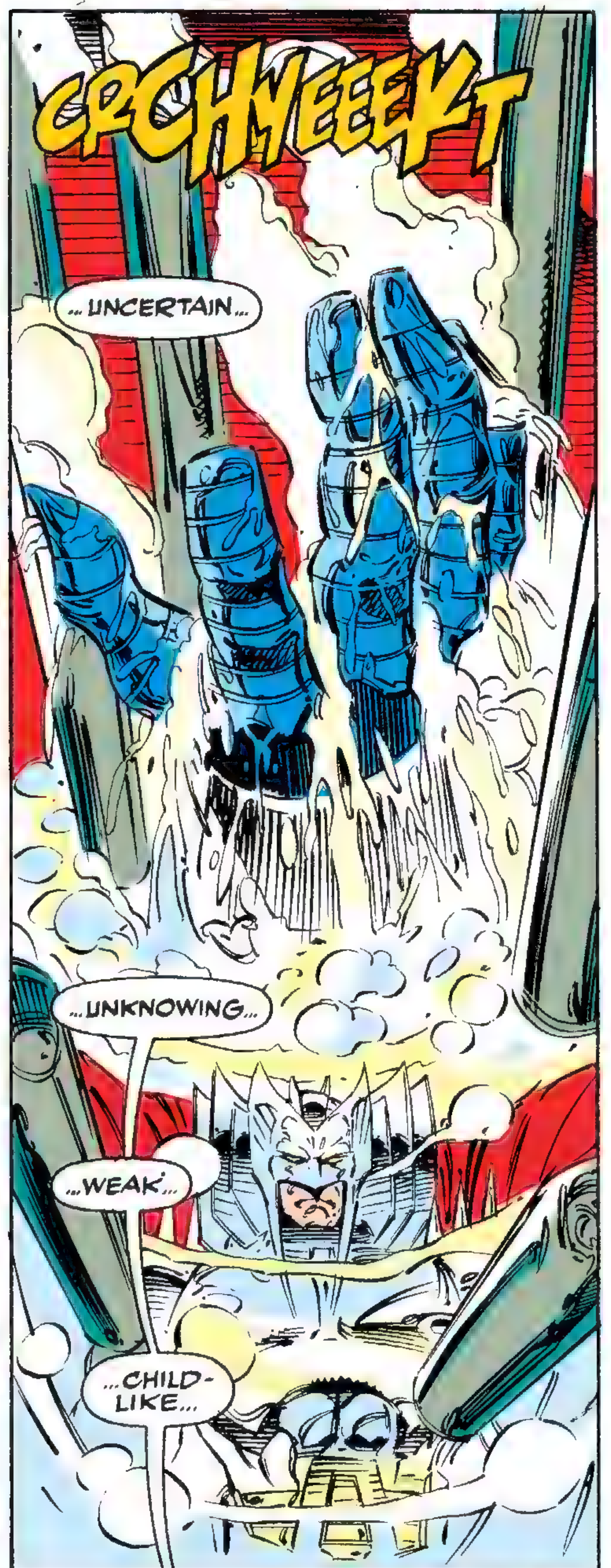
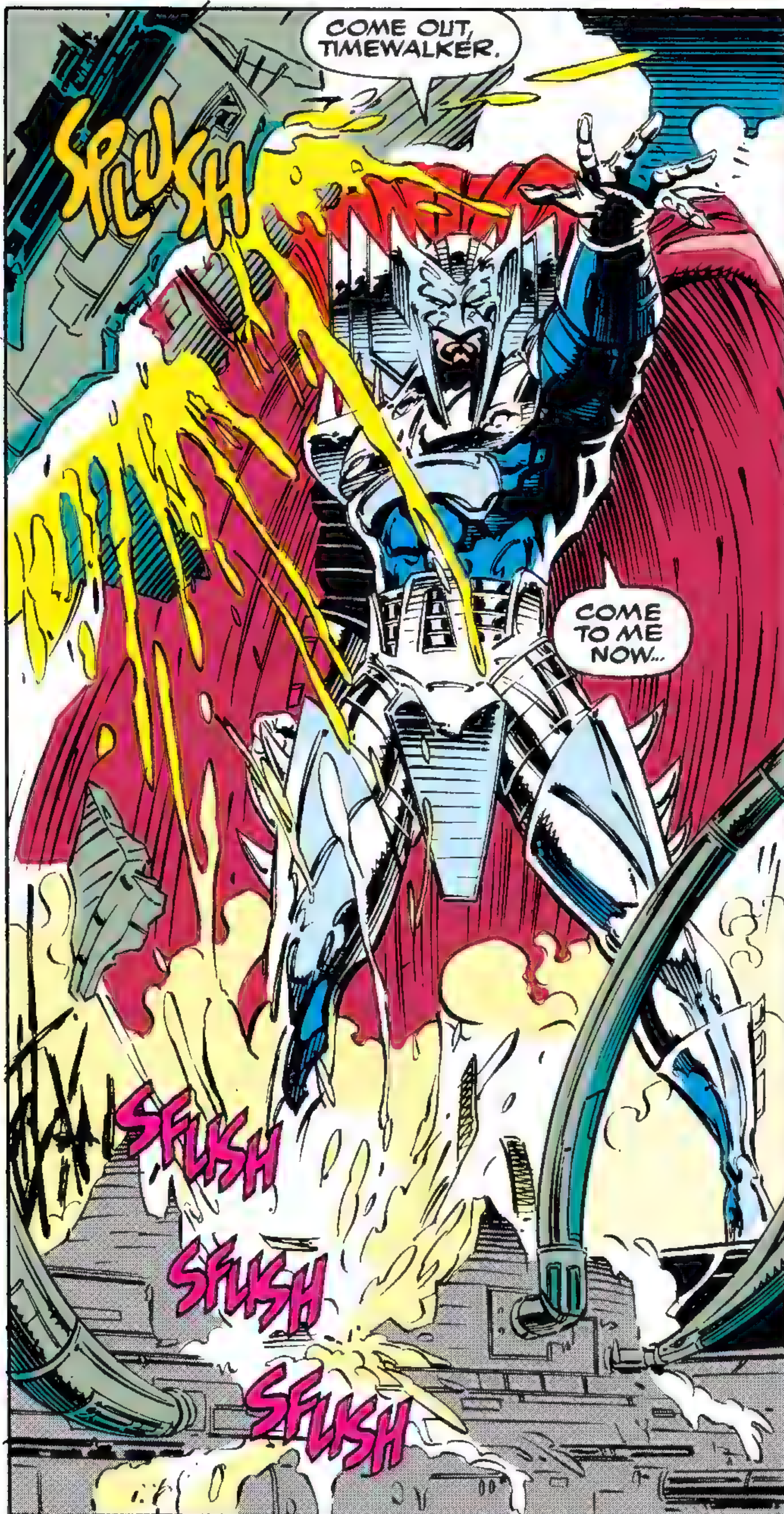
FOXBAT
IS
DOWNED.

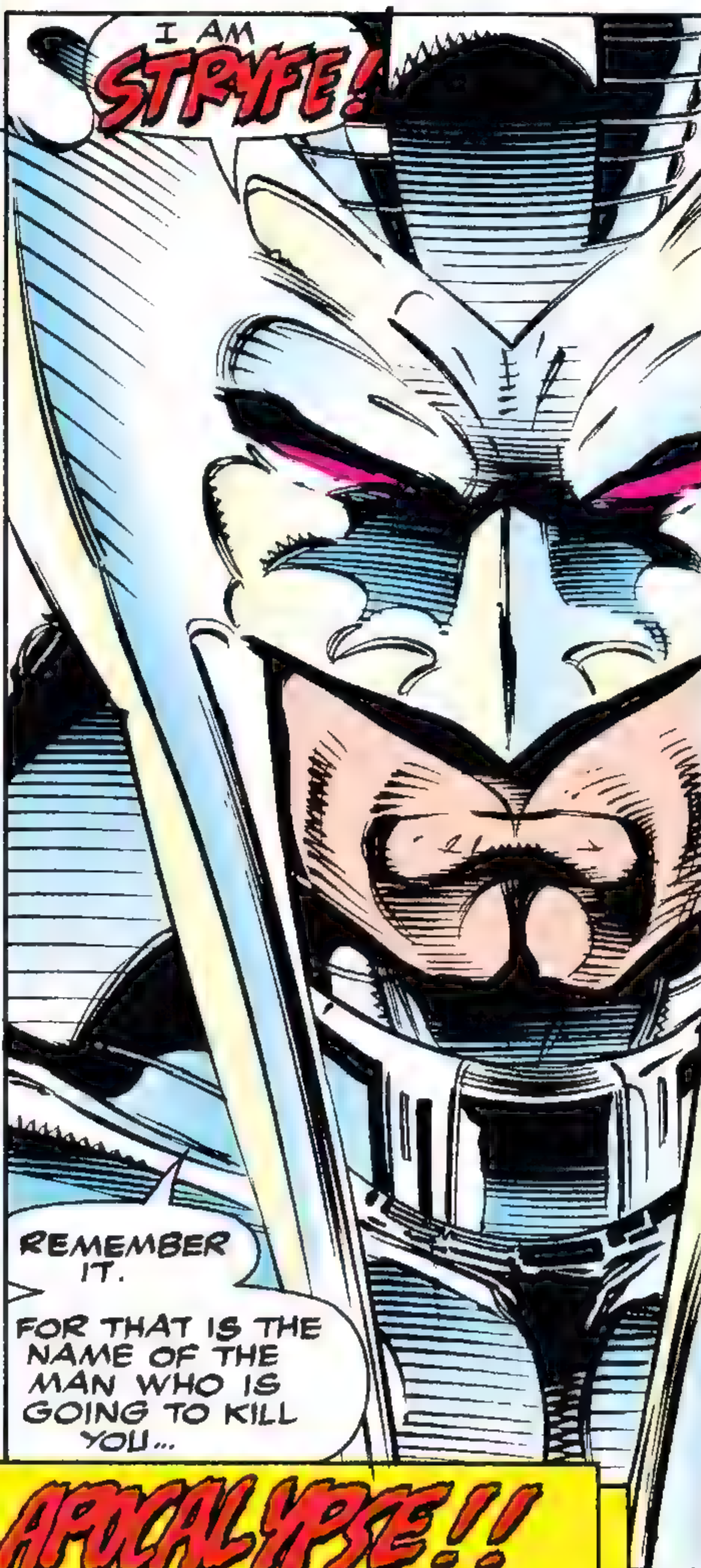
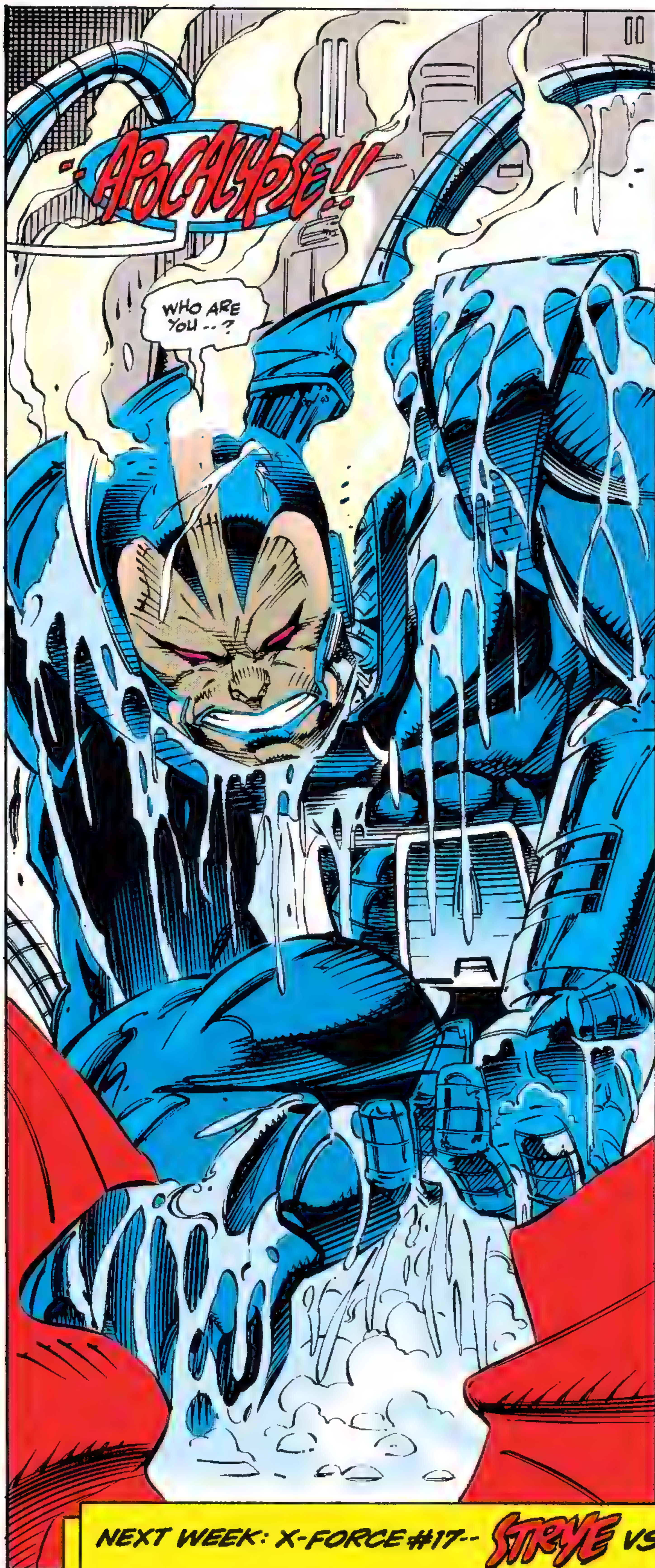
PSYNAPSE AND
TUSK ARE EASILY
DISPOSED OF
WITH A BRUSH-
STROKE.



GAUNTLET, FOR
ALL HIS DISPLAYS
OF MACHISMO, IS
EQUALLY INEFFECTIVE.







NEXT WEEK: X-FORCE #17-- **STRYFE VS. APOCALYPSE!!**

'NUFF SAID!



X-CUTIONER'S SONG

PART 8

X-FORCE

1.50 US
1.80 CAN/UK 80p
17 DEC
01766

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY



THE MUTANT LIBERATION FRONT HAS BEEN CRUSHED! PROFESSOR XAVIER INCHES CLOSER TO DEATH! THE ONE WHO COULD SAVE HIM FACES OFF AGAINST THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR IT ALL-- APOCALYPSE VERSUS STRYFE!

THE X-CUTIONER'S SONG

CONTINUES!

INSIDE THE TEMPLE
AT BANT MAZA,
BEHIND THE WALLS
OF YESTERDAY--

-- THE BATTLE FOR
TOMORROW BEGINS!

THE TIME
HAS COME
APOCALYPSE.

THE DEVIL-
TO-COME
MUST PAY
HIS DUE--

-- TO THE
DEVIL WHO
MADE HIM...

PAY ME,
MASTER
OF TIME!

AND LET
YOUR DEATH
BE THE COIN OF
EXCHANGE!

I OWE YOU
NOTHING
STRYFE...

STAN LEE
PROUDLY
PRESENTS

A TALE OF TIME
AND VENGEANCE
BROUGHT TO YOU
BY

FABIAN
NICIEZA
WRITER

GREG
CAPULLO
PENCILER

HARRY
CANDELARIO
INKER

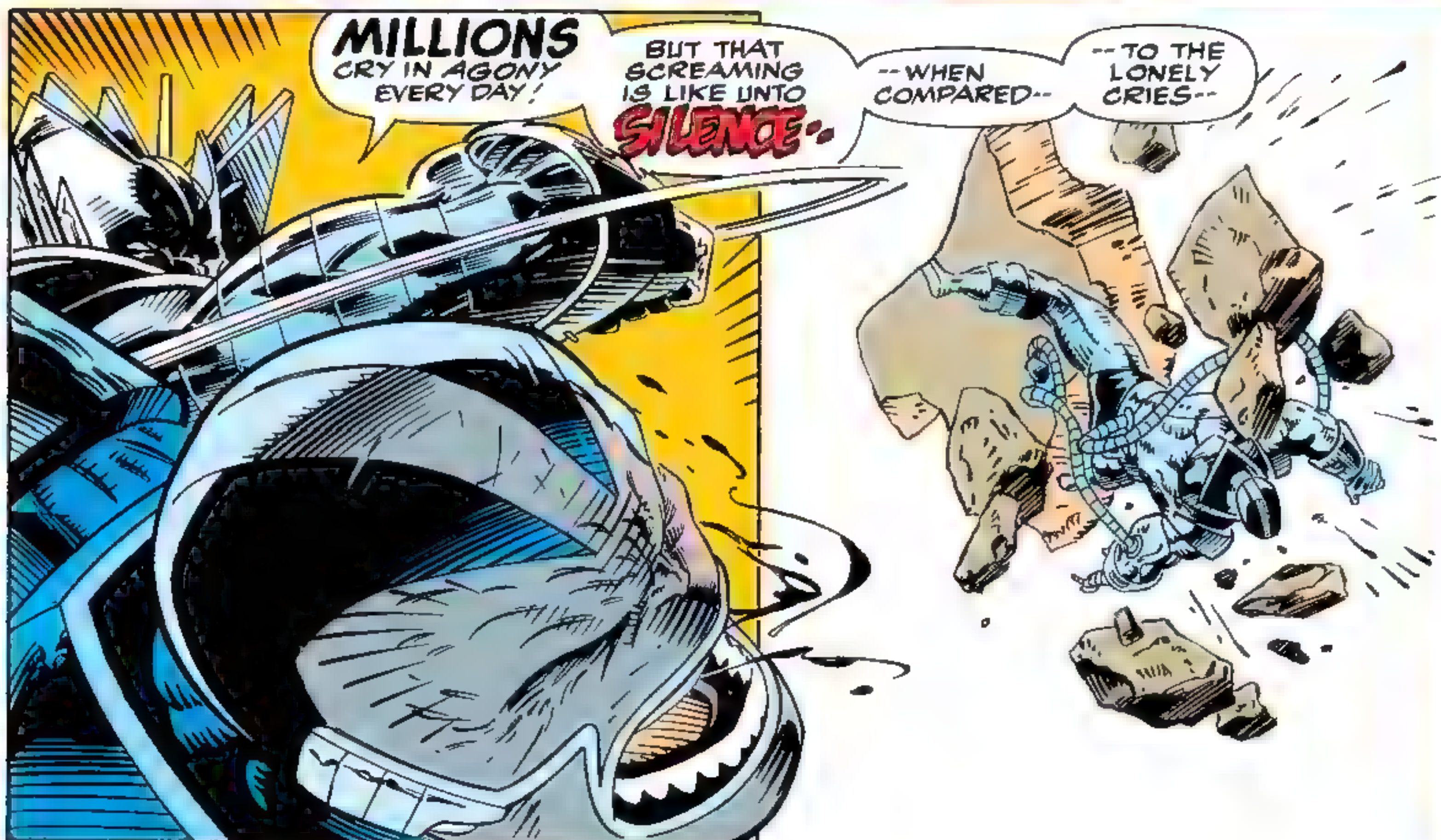
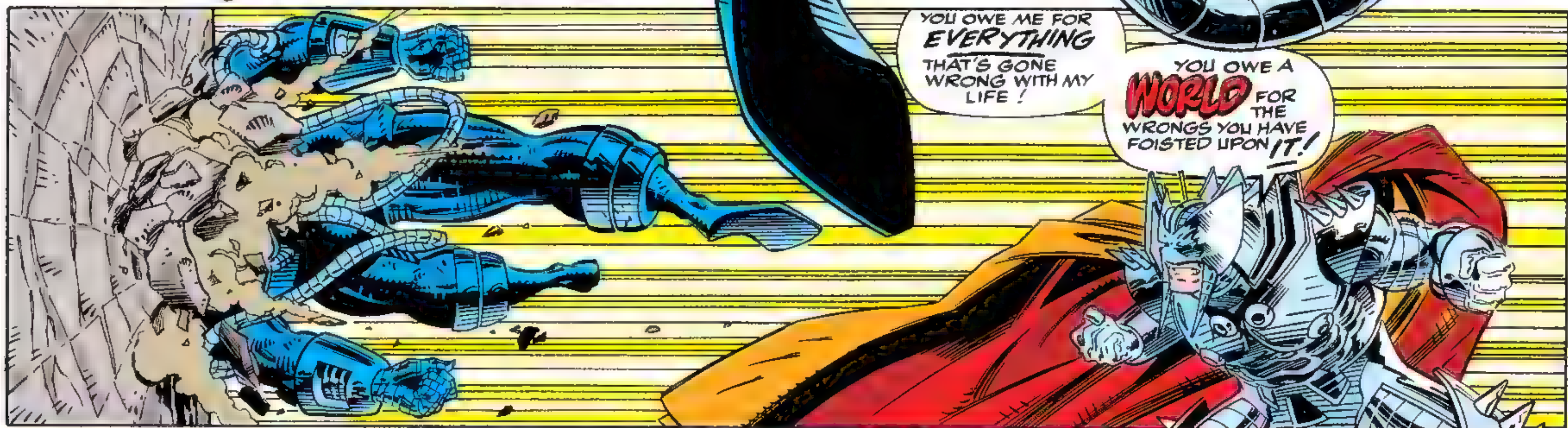
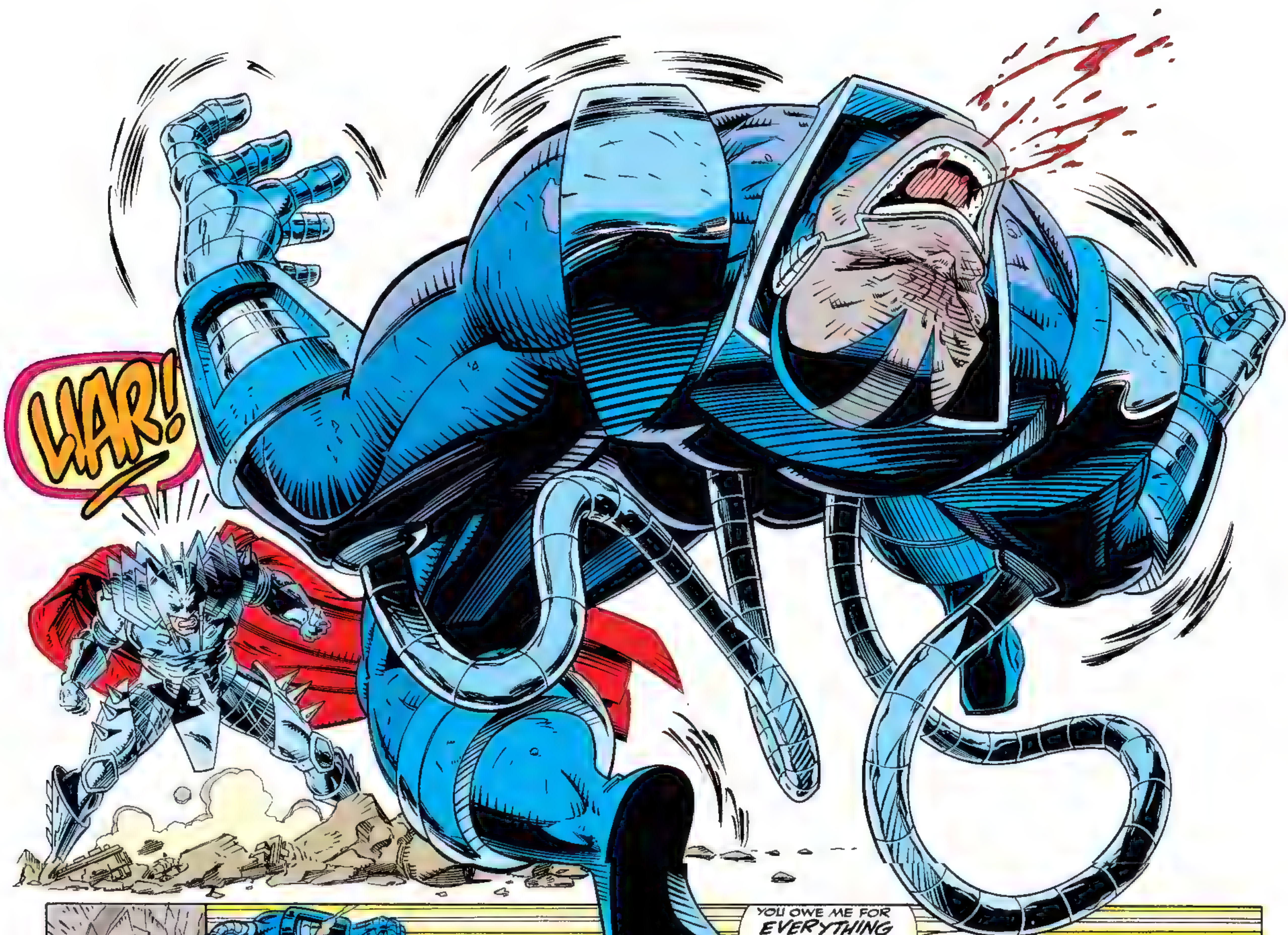
CHRIS
ELIOPOLLOS
LETTERER

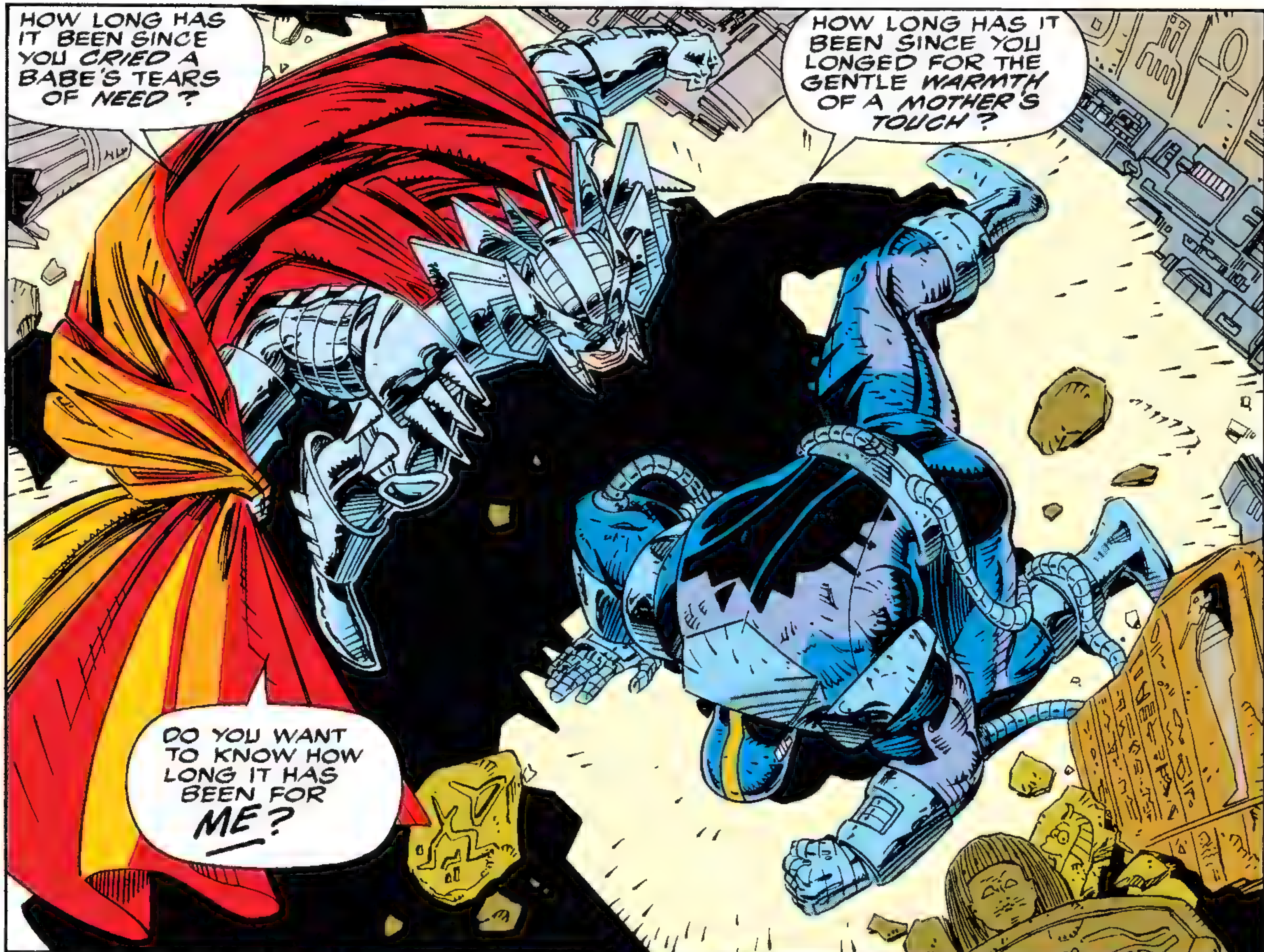
FRENCHIE
BUCCELLATO
COLORIST

BOB
HARRAS
EDITOR

TOM
DEFALCO
COUNTIN' \$\$\$

SLEEPING WITH THE ENEMY





HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE YOU CRIED A BABE'S TEARS OF NEED?

HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE YOU LONGED FOR THE GENTLE WARMTH OF A MOTHER'S TOUCH?

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW LONG IT HAS BEEN FOR ME?



IT HAS BEEN **FOREVER!**

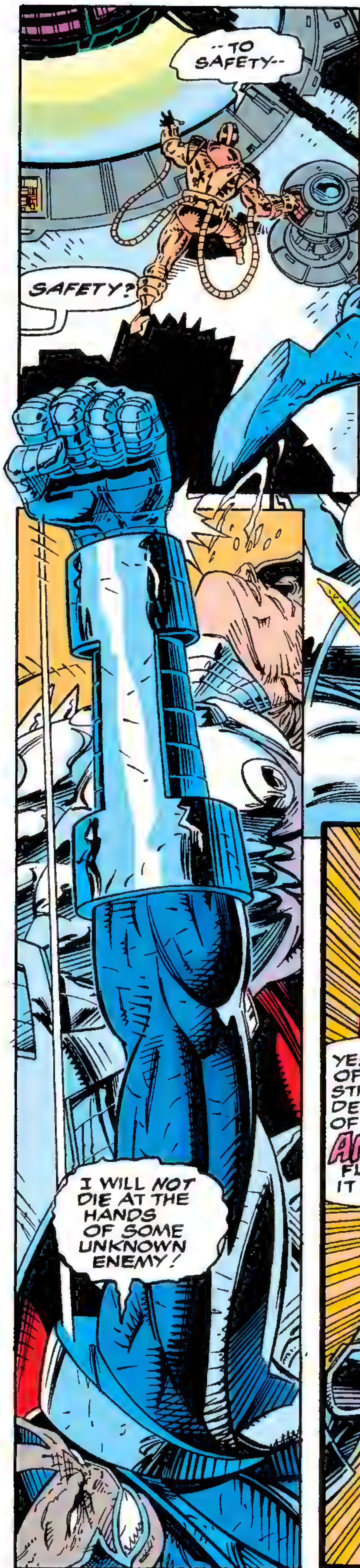
A FOREVER-SOLITUDE BROUGHT ON BY **YOU**, FATHER OF PAIN, SON OF THE MORNING FIRE!



TRYING TO REACH YOUR TELEPORTATION MATRIX, APOCALYPSE?

TRYING TO ESCAPE?

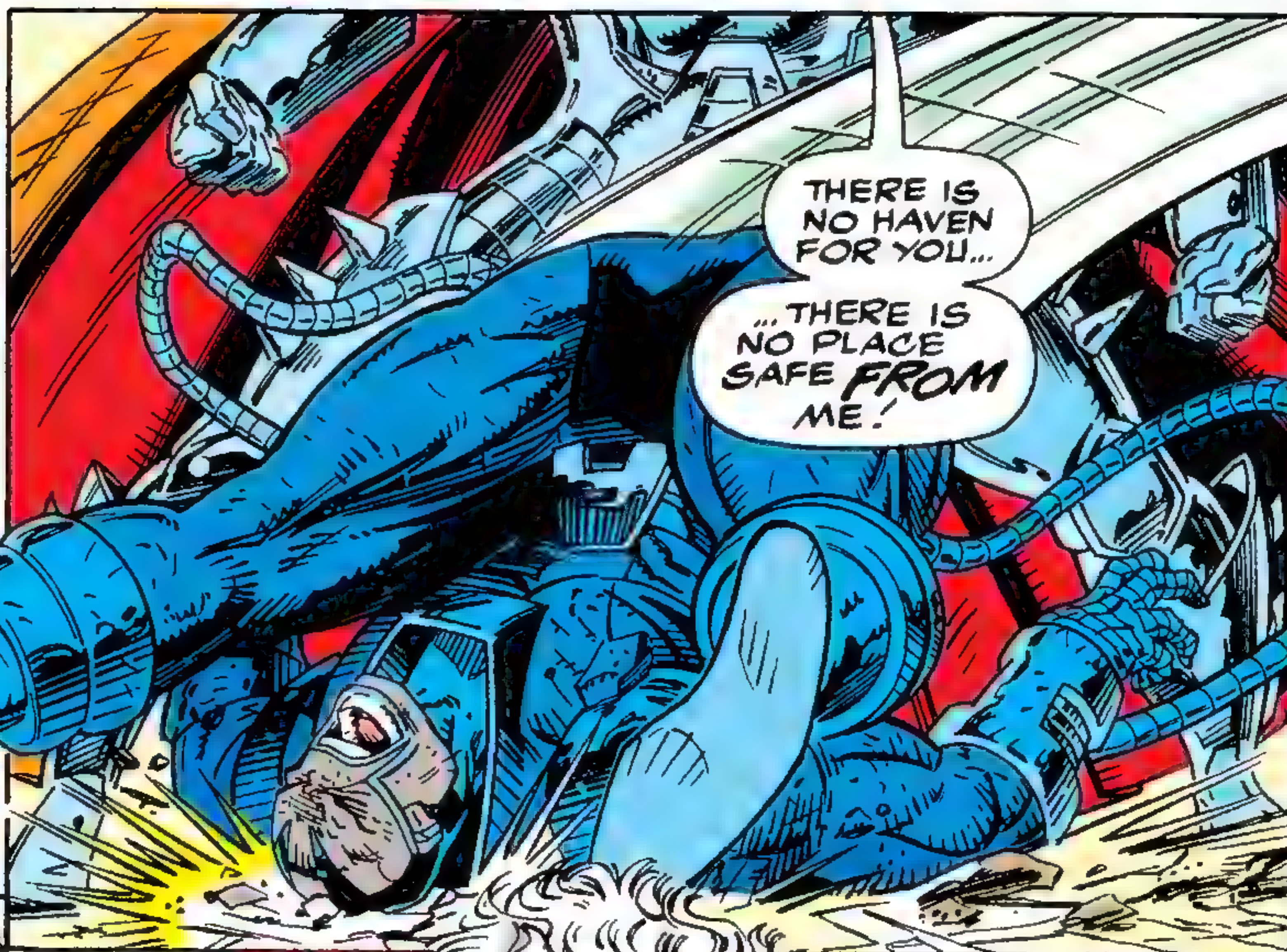
WHERE CAN YOU FLEE?



-- TO
SAFETY--

SAFETY?

I WILL NOT
DIE AT THE
HANDS
OF SOME
UNKNOWN
ENEMY!



THERE IS
NO HAVEN
FOR YOU...

...THERE IS
NO PLACE
SAFE FROM
ME!



A FINAL,
FEEBLE
ATTEMPT AT
SALVATION?

VERY
WELL, HATE-
MAKER--

--NOW THAT
YOU KNOW WHO
I AM--

--ARE YOU
PREPARED
TO DIE?

YOU?
BUT
YOU--



YES, MASTER
OF THE TIME-
STREAM,
DESTROYER
OF MY PAST
AND MY
FUTURE--
IT IS I.



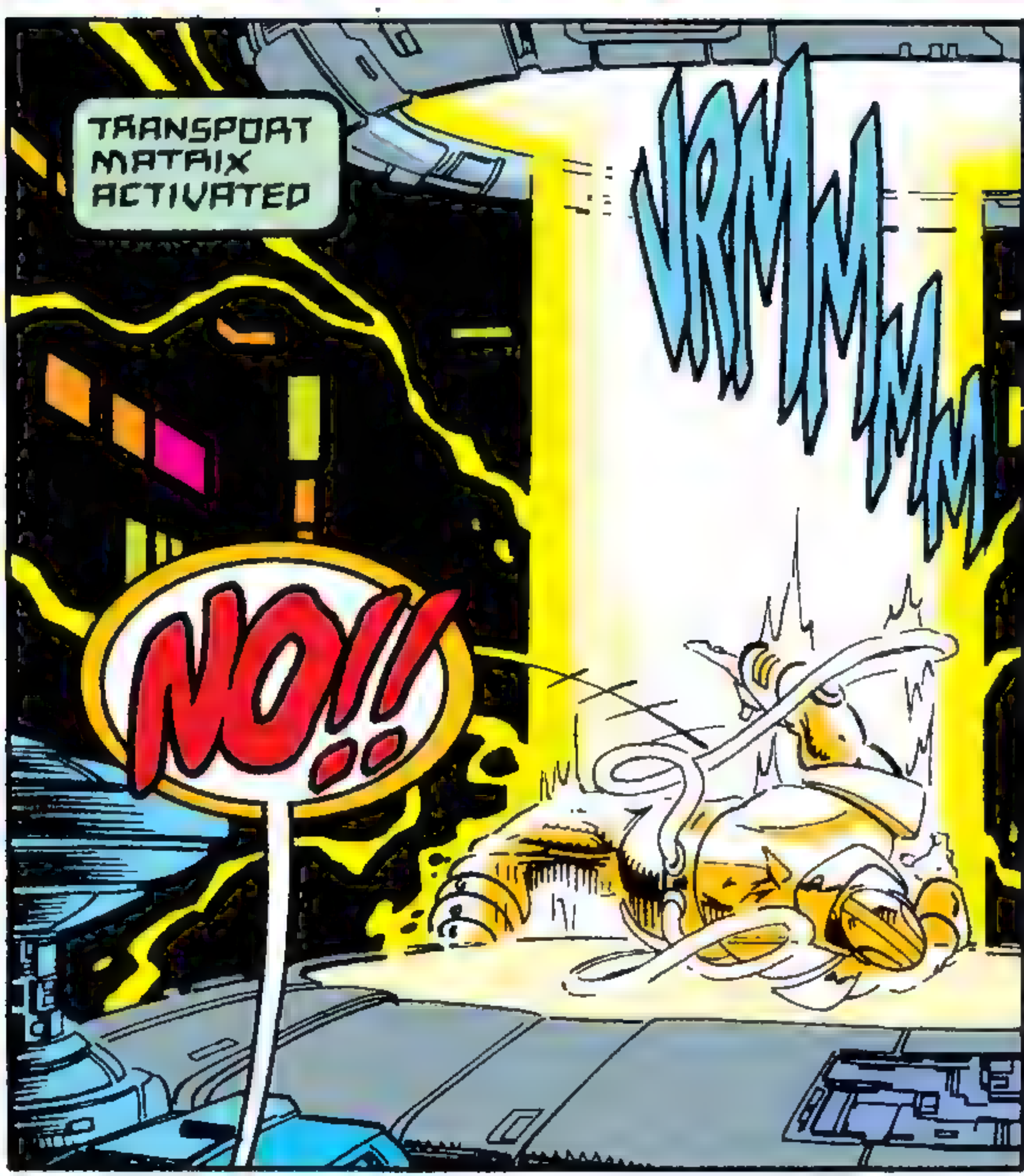
AND NOW, YOU
END -- DEAD
OUTSIDE, DEAD
INSIDE, LIKE
ME --

--A MAN
OUT OF
PLACE--

SHUFFFF

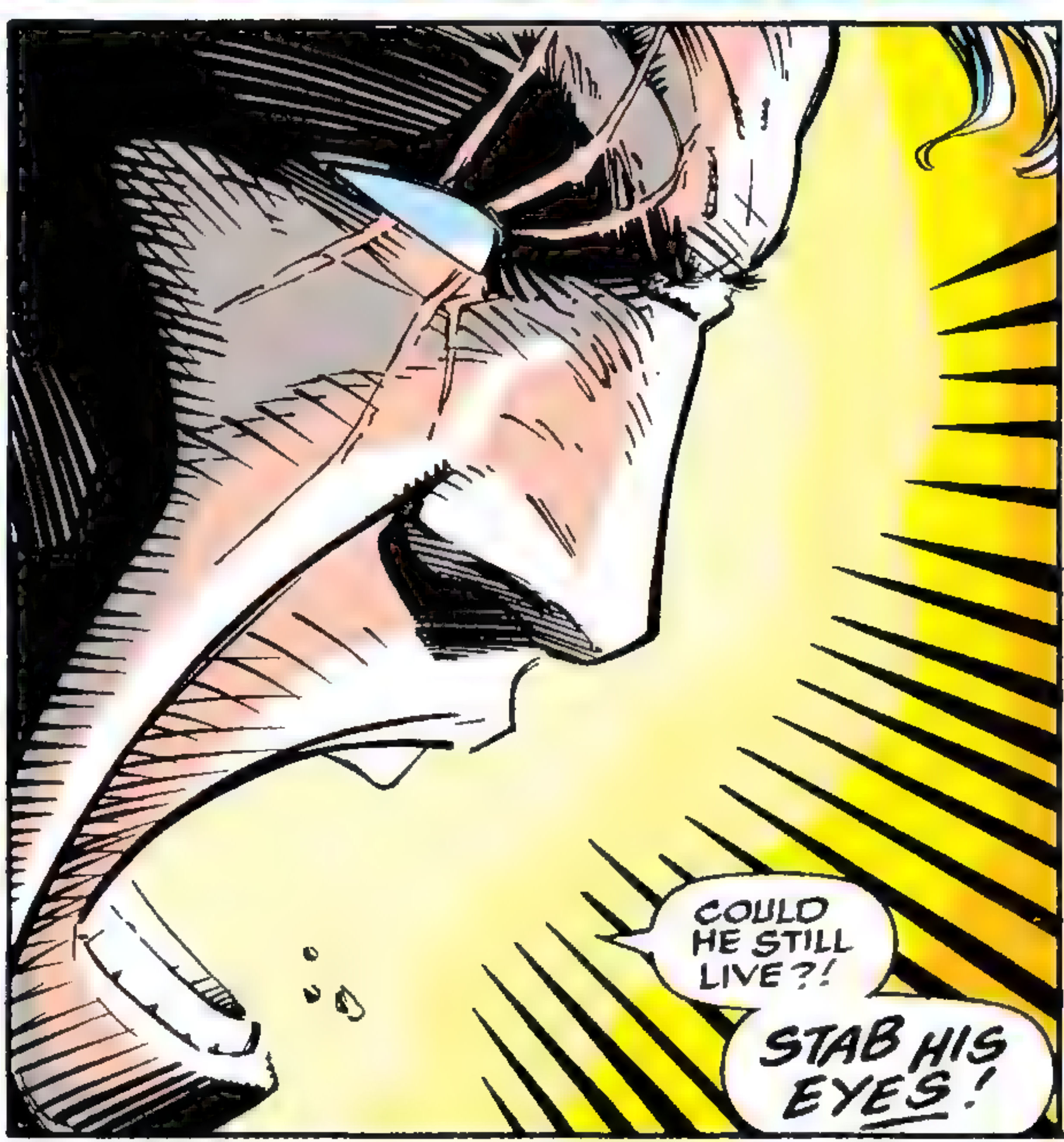
**--A MAN
OUT OF
TIME!!**

--HURK--
--THE
BLADE--
--BUT
HOW--
--WHEN I
ONCE USED
IT--
--TO KILL
YOU--!



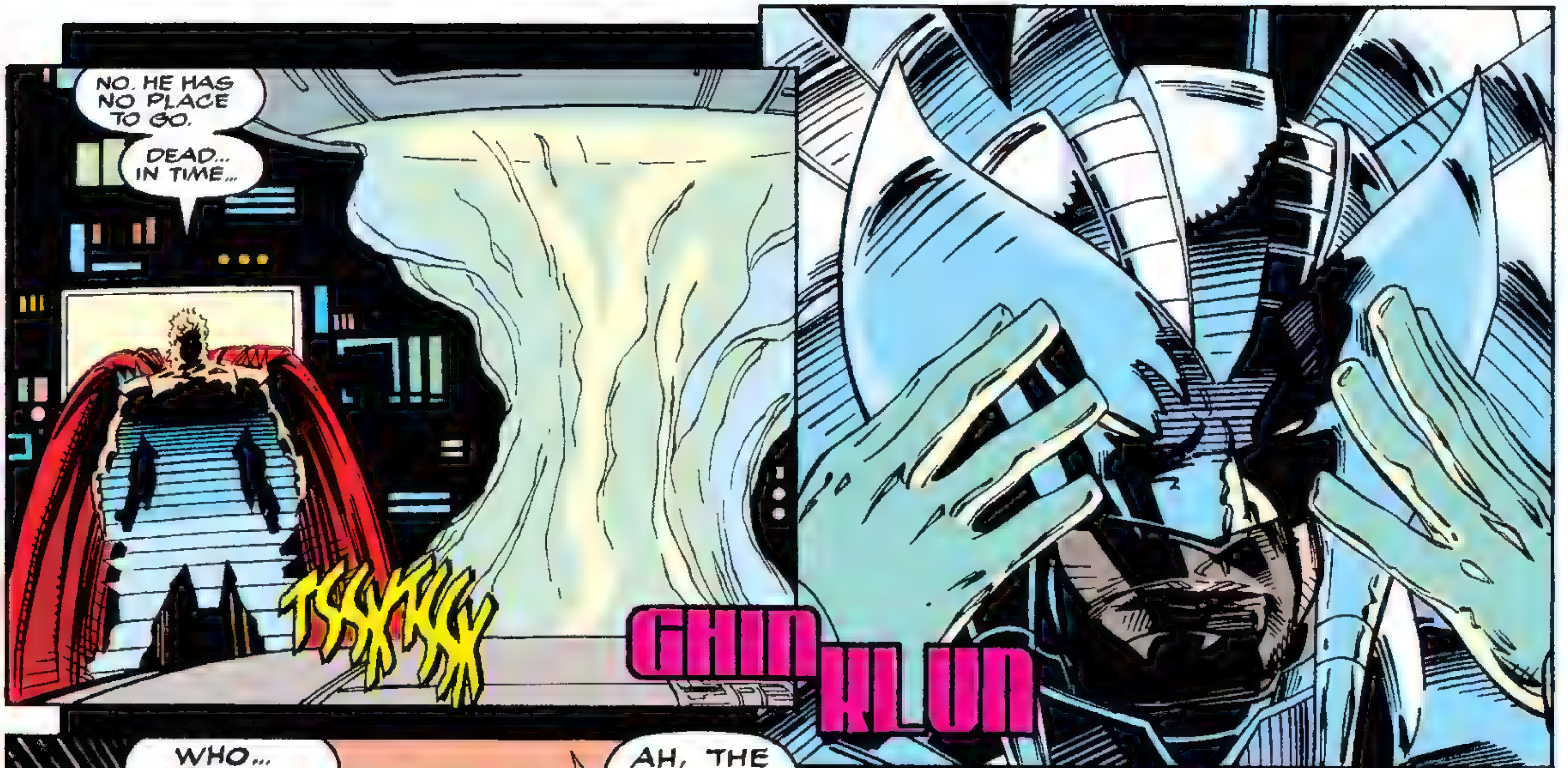
TRANSPORT
MATRIX
ACTIVATED

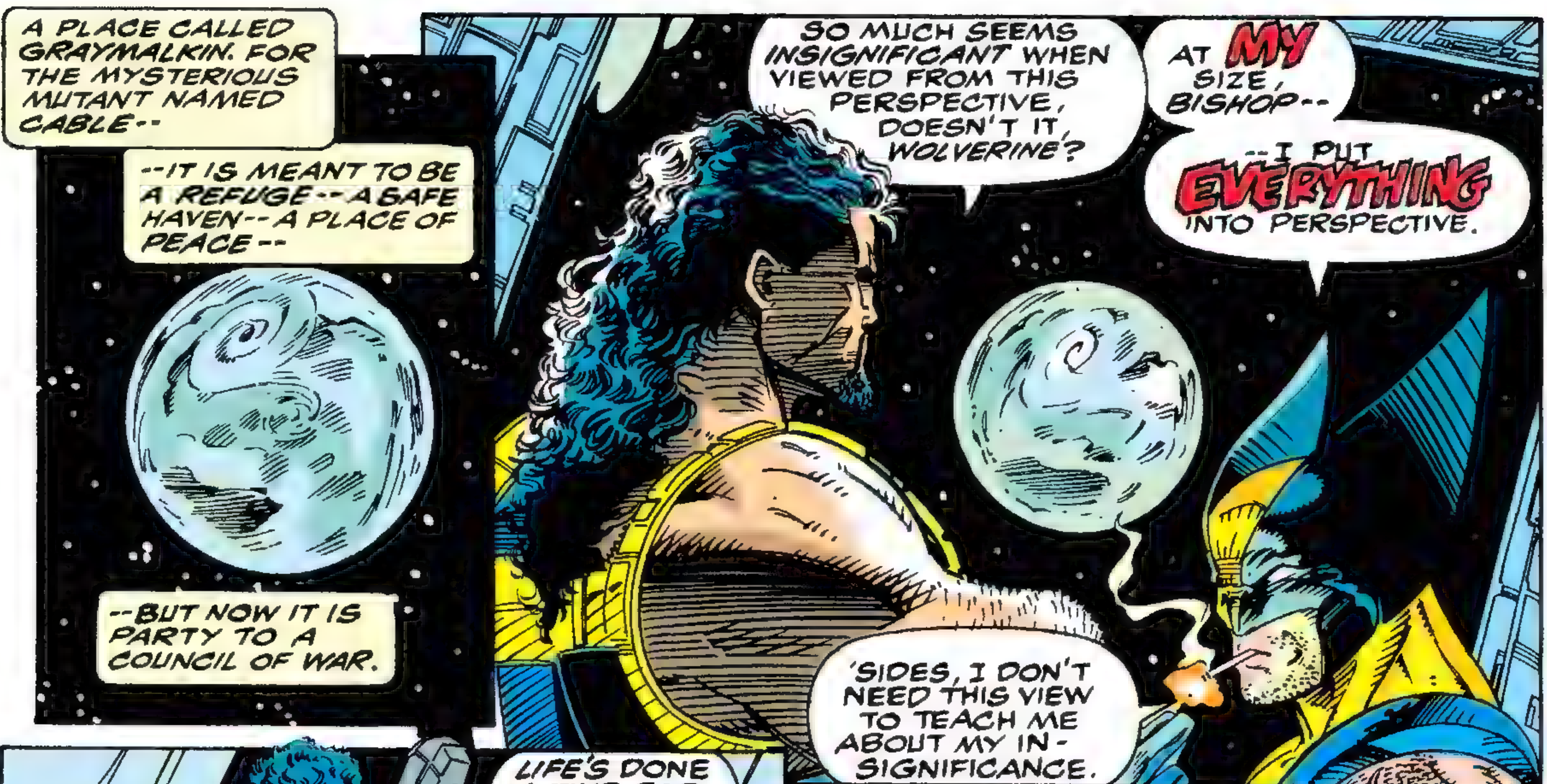
NO!!



COULD
HE STILL
LIVE?!

**STAB HIS
EYES!**





A PLACE CALLED GRAYMALKIN. FOR THE MYSTERIOUS MUTANT NAMED CABLE--

--IT IS MEANT TO BE A REFUGE-- A SAFE HAVEN-- A PLACE OF PEACE--

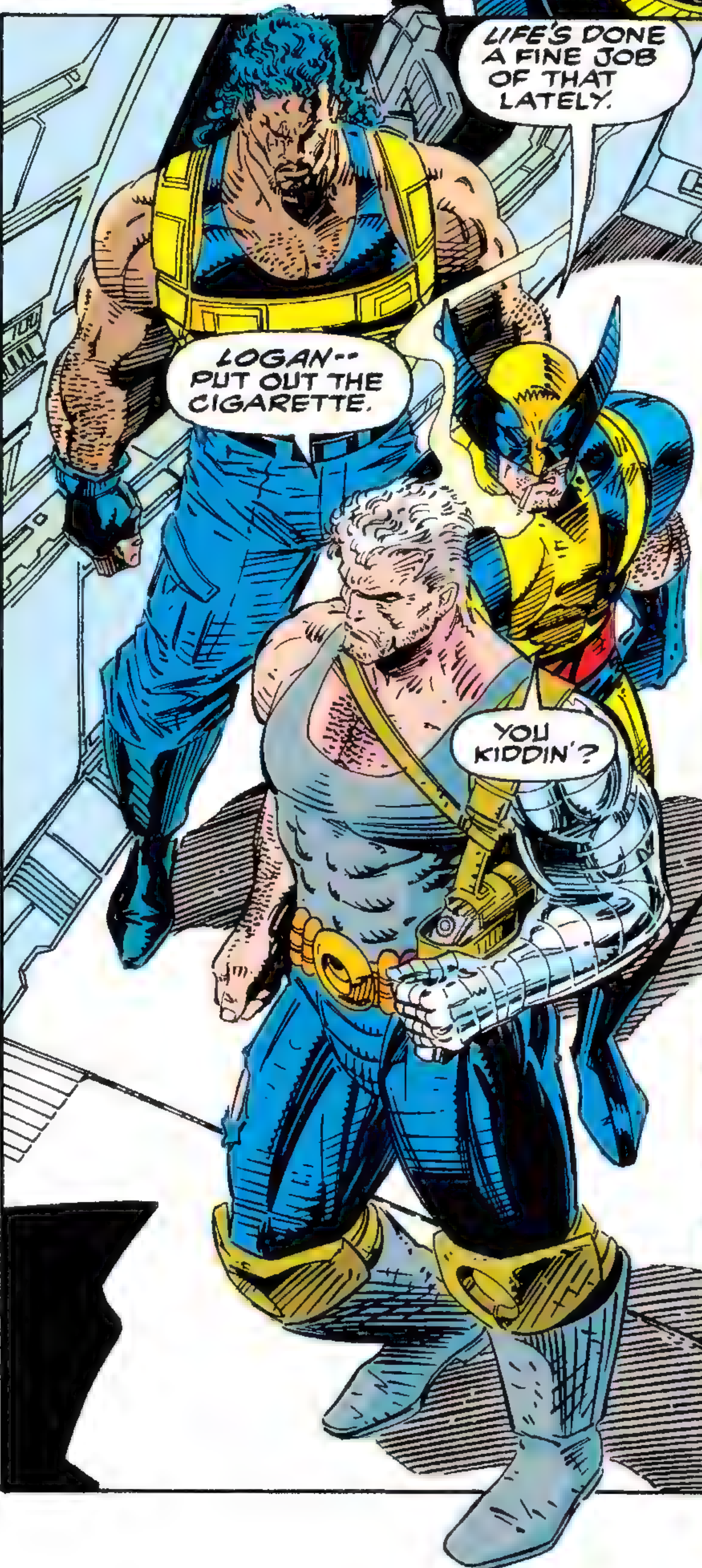
--BUT NOW IT IS PARTY TO A COUNCIL OF WAR.

SO MUCH SEEMS INSIGNIFICANT WHEN VIEWED FROM THIS PERSPECTIVE, DOESN'T IT, WOLVERINE?

AT **MY** SIZE, BISHOP--

--I PUT **EVERYTHING** INTO PERSPECTIVE.

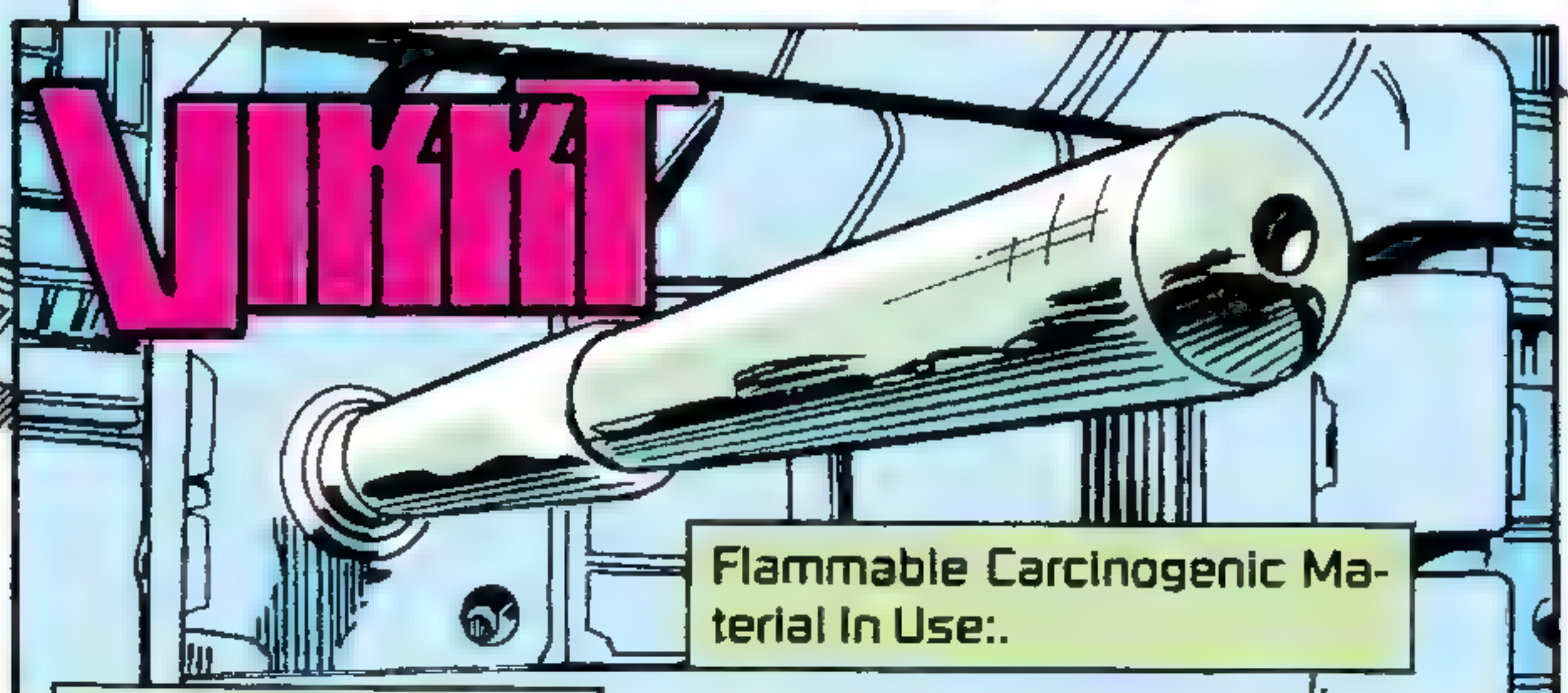
'SIDES, I DON'T NEED THIS VIEW TO TEACH ME ABOUT MY IN-SIGNIFICANCE.



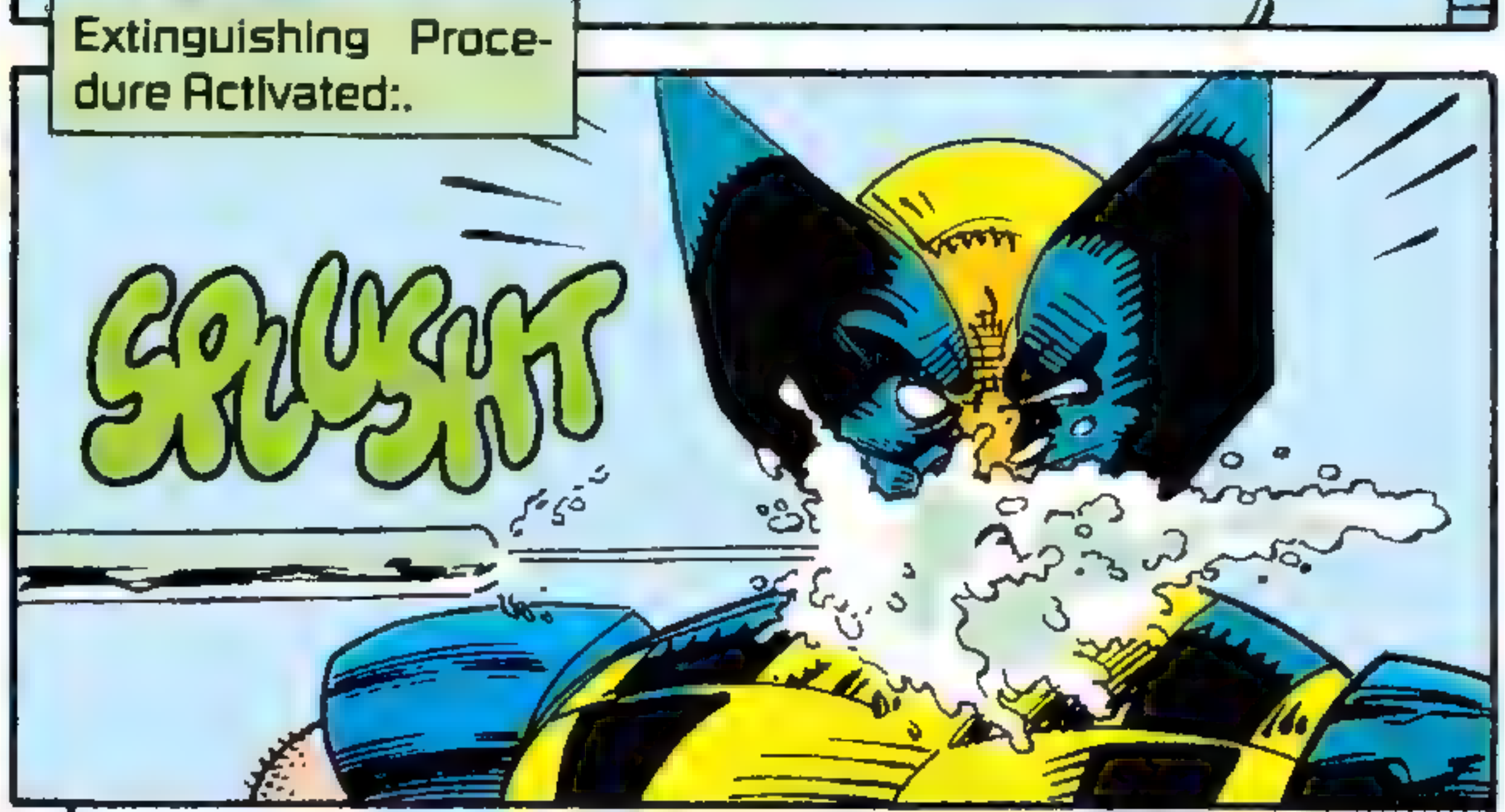
LIFE'S DONE A FINE JOB OF THAT LATELY.

LOGAN-- PUT OUT THE CIGARETTE.

YOU KIDDIN'?



Flammable Carcinogenic Material In Use..



Extinguishing Procedure Activated:..



Procedure Enabled:..



DON'T BLAME THE COMPUTER. IT'S ONLY FOLLOWING ITS PROGRAMMING.

UHM-- WHERE I COME FROM--SMOKING ISN'T CONSIDERED VERY SMART.

I DON'T LIKE YOU, CABLE.

I'VE **NEVER** LIKED YOU.

I LIKE YOUR HOUSE EVEN LESS.

IT'S GOT AS MUCH PERSONALITY AS YOU DO.

MORE, ACTUALLY.

COME ON. WE HAVE A JOB TO DO.

TO ERADICATE THIS MAN, STRYFE--

-- THE TERRORIST BEHIND THE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON CHARLES XAVIER.

MORE THAN A TERRORIST, BISHOP.

MORE A FORCE FOR **ANARCHY.** BORN AND BRED FOR **CHAOS.**

... BUT DESPERATELY TRYING TO FIND A SENSE OF **ORDER.**



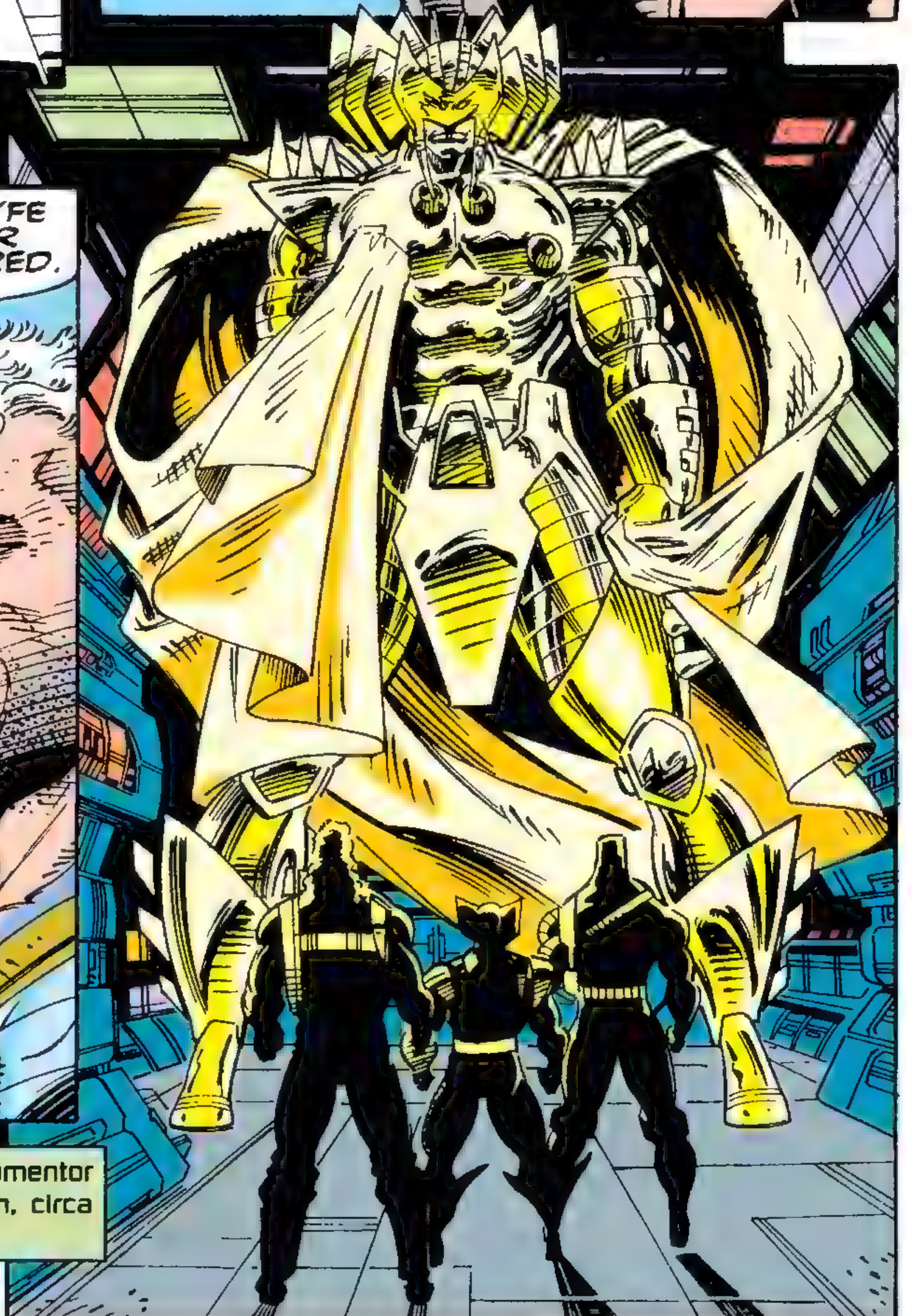
NICE POETRY. START TALKIN'.

PROFESSOR, STRYFE LOG RECOUNT FOR THE DETAIL IMPAIRED.

PROFESSOR?

STRYFE: real name unknown. Age: unknown.

Status: self-proclaimed anarchist and fomentor of political dissent. Nor-Am Pact region, circa 3783-3806 A.D.



STAYFE has participated in acts of aggression against both the controlling rulers, the *HIGH LORDS* of *NEW CANAAN* —



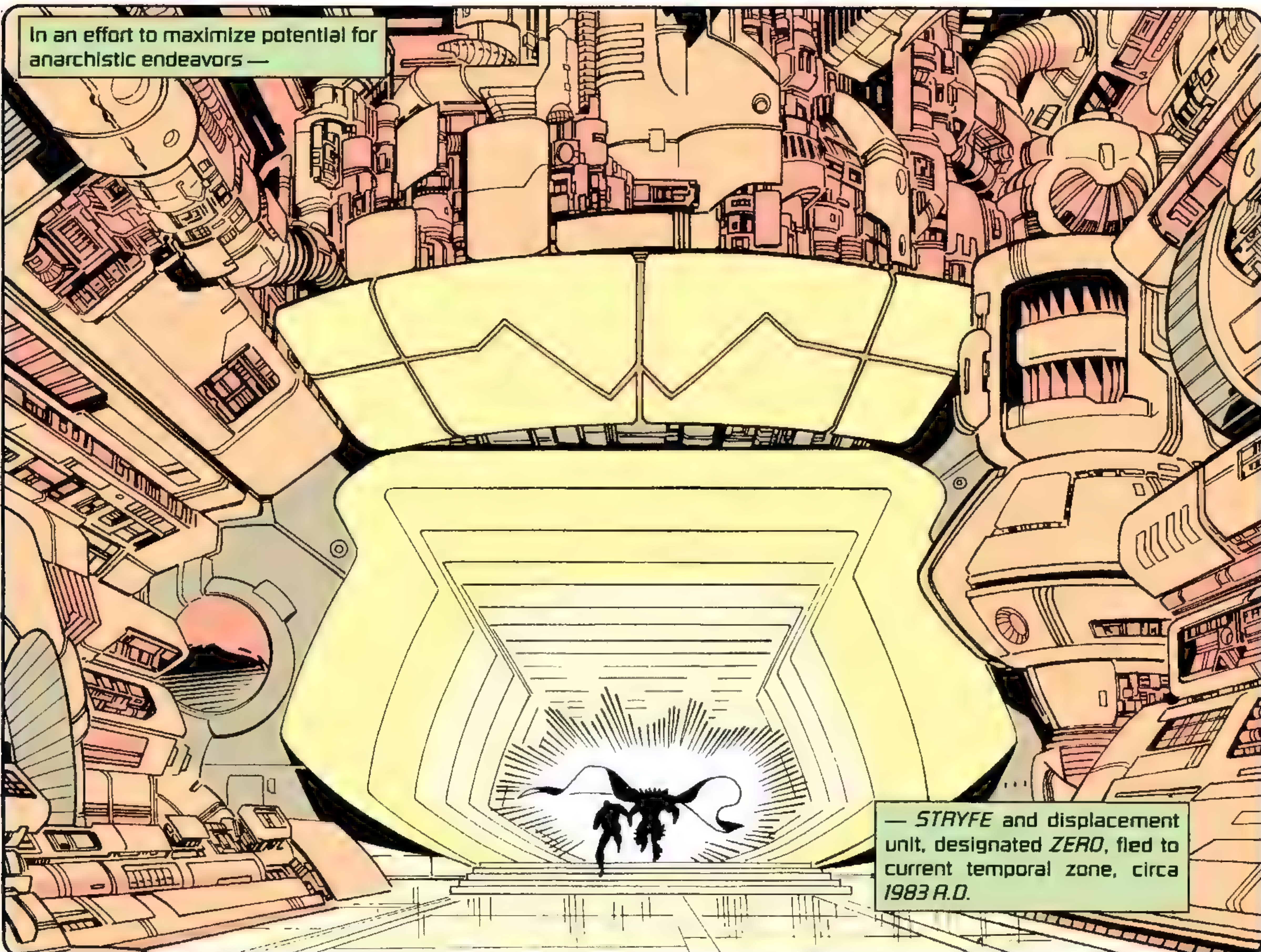
— as well as the rebellion forces known as the *CLAN CHOSEN*.

December 25, 3806, Canaanites defeated the remnants of the Mac-Sino Province Pact —

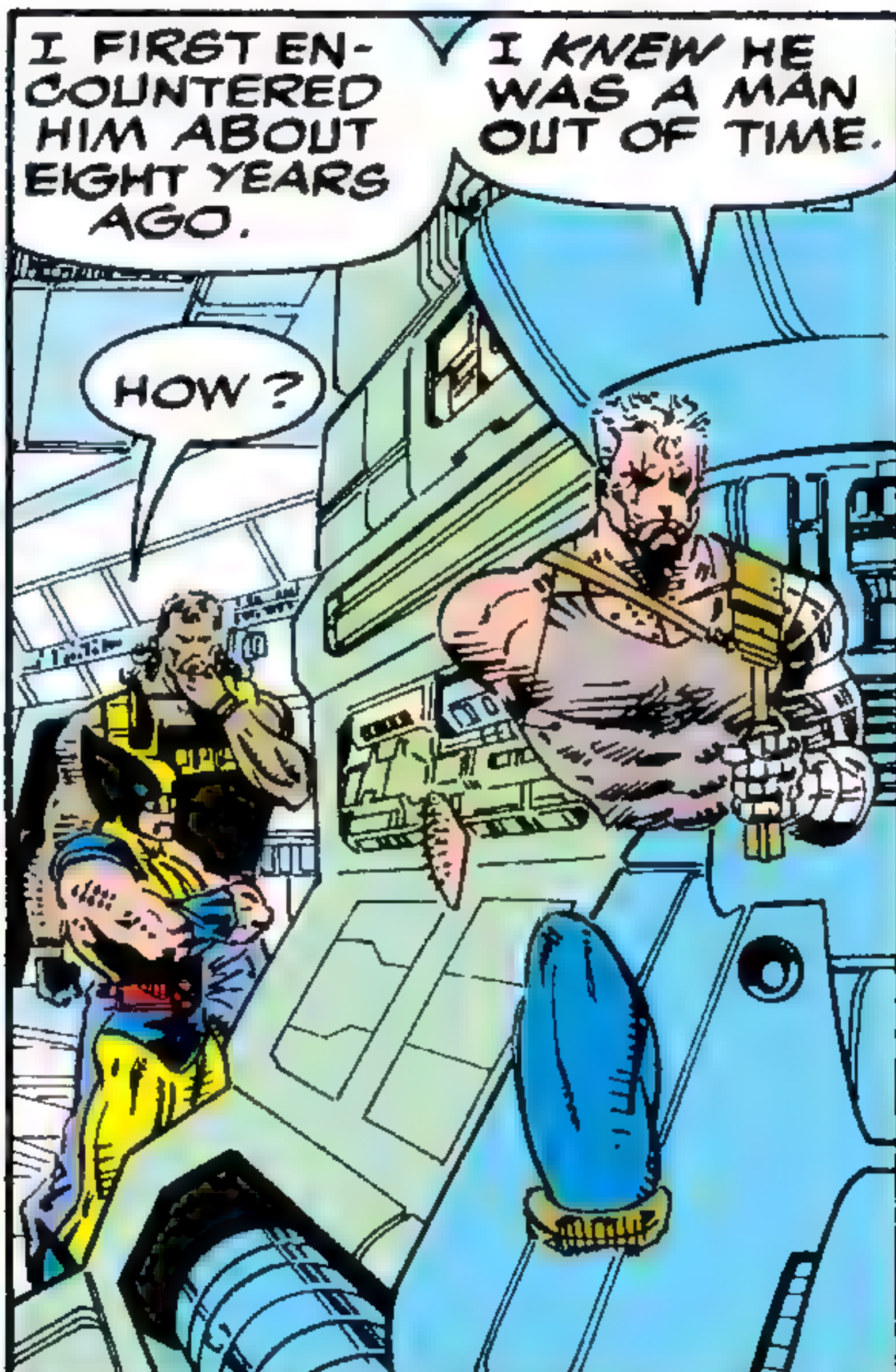


— thereby consolidating control of global forces.

In an effort to maximize potential for anarchistic endeavors —



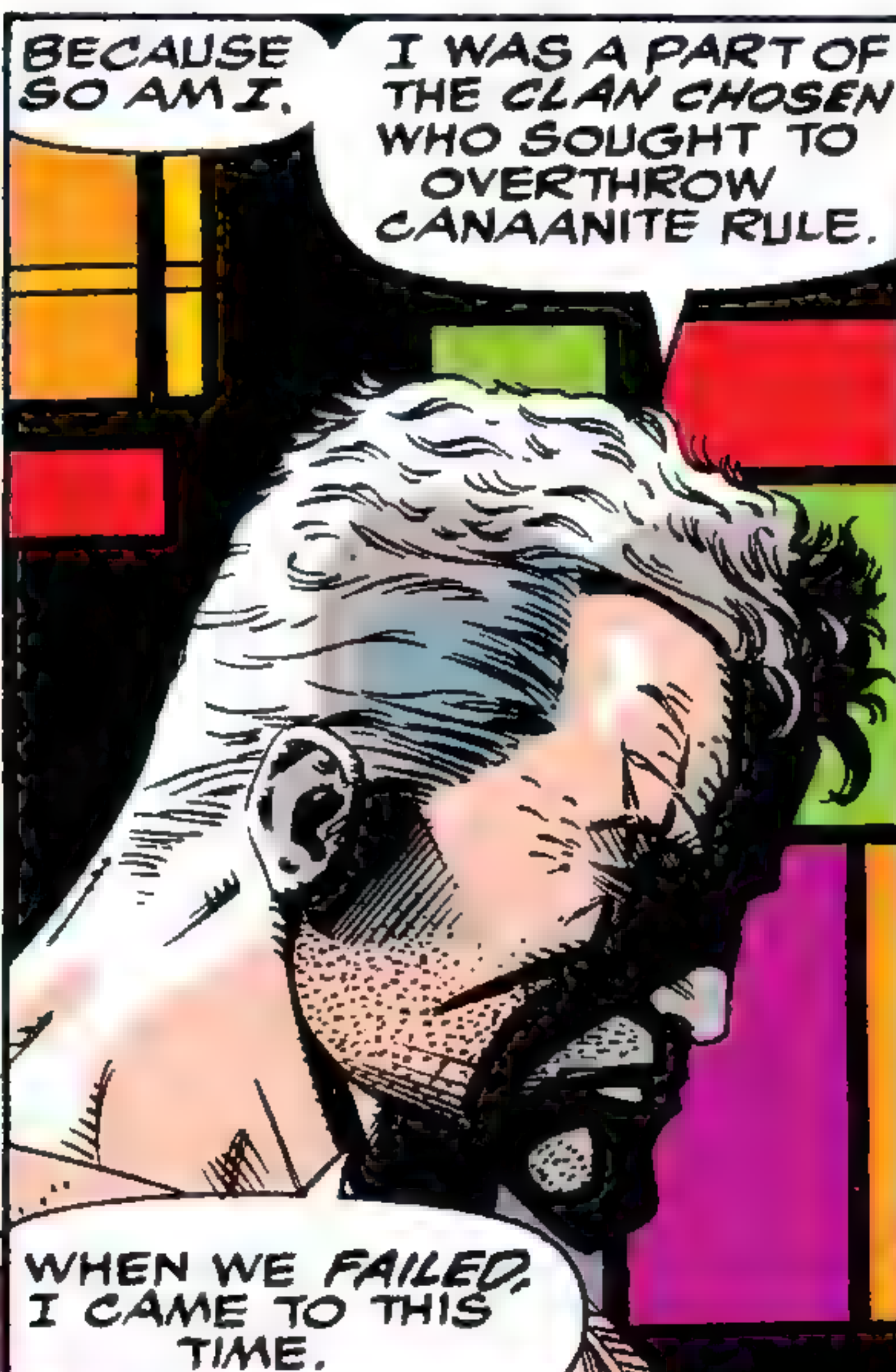
— *STAYFE* and displacement unit, designated *ZERO*, fled to current temporal zone, circa 1983 A.D.



I FIRST ENCOUNTERED HIM ABOUT EIGHT YEARS AGO.

I KNEW HE WAS A MAN OUT OF TIME.

HOW?



BECAUSE SO AM I.

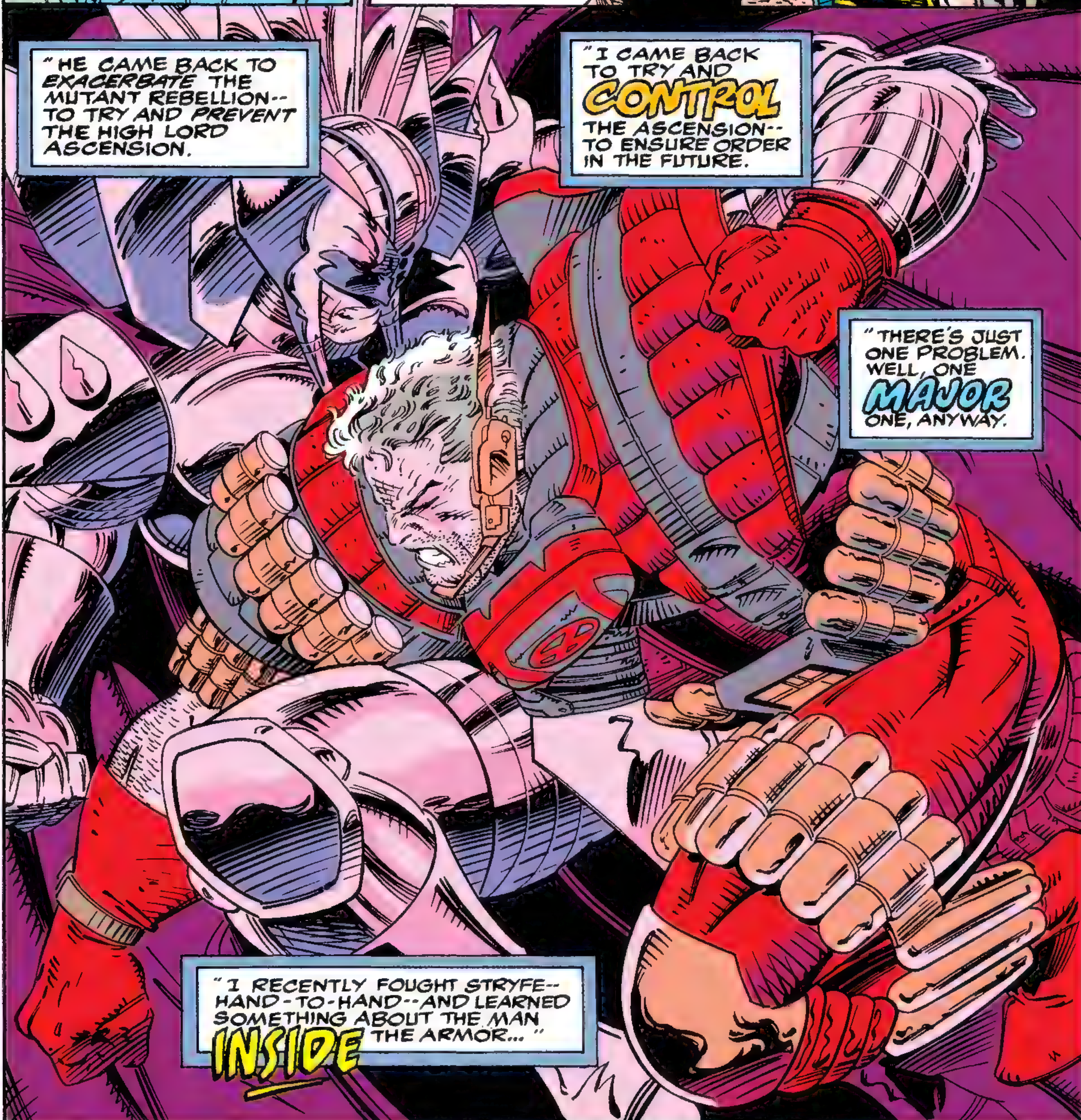
I WAS A PART OF THE CLAN CHOSEN WHO SOUGHT TO OVERTHROW CANAANITE RULE.

WHEN WE FAILED, I CAME TO THIS TIME.



SO YOU AND STRYFE ARE DIFFERENT SIDES OF THE SAME COIN?

YES. NO. MAYBE.



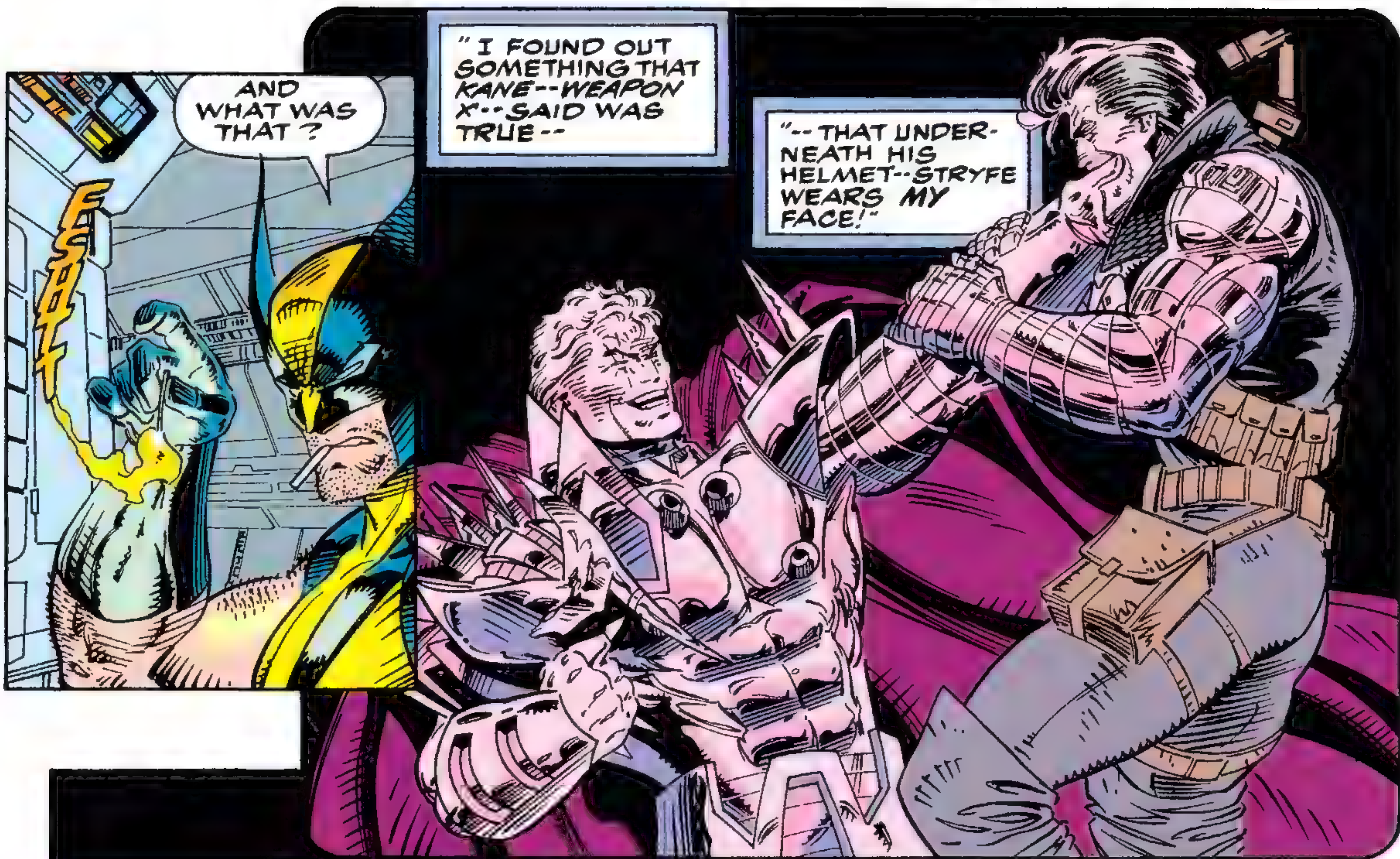
"HE CAME BACK TO EXACERBATE THE MUTANT REBELLION-- TO TRY AND PREVENT THE HIGH LORD ASCENSION.

"I CAME BACK TO TRY AND **CONTROL** THE ASCENSION-- TO ENSURE ORDER IN THE FUTURE.

"THERE'S JUST ONE PROBLEM. WELL, ONE **MAJOR** ONE, ANYWAY.

"I RECENTLY FOUGHT STRYFE-- HAND-TO-HAND-- AND LEARNED SOMETHING ABOUT THE MAN THE ARMOR..."

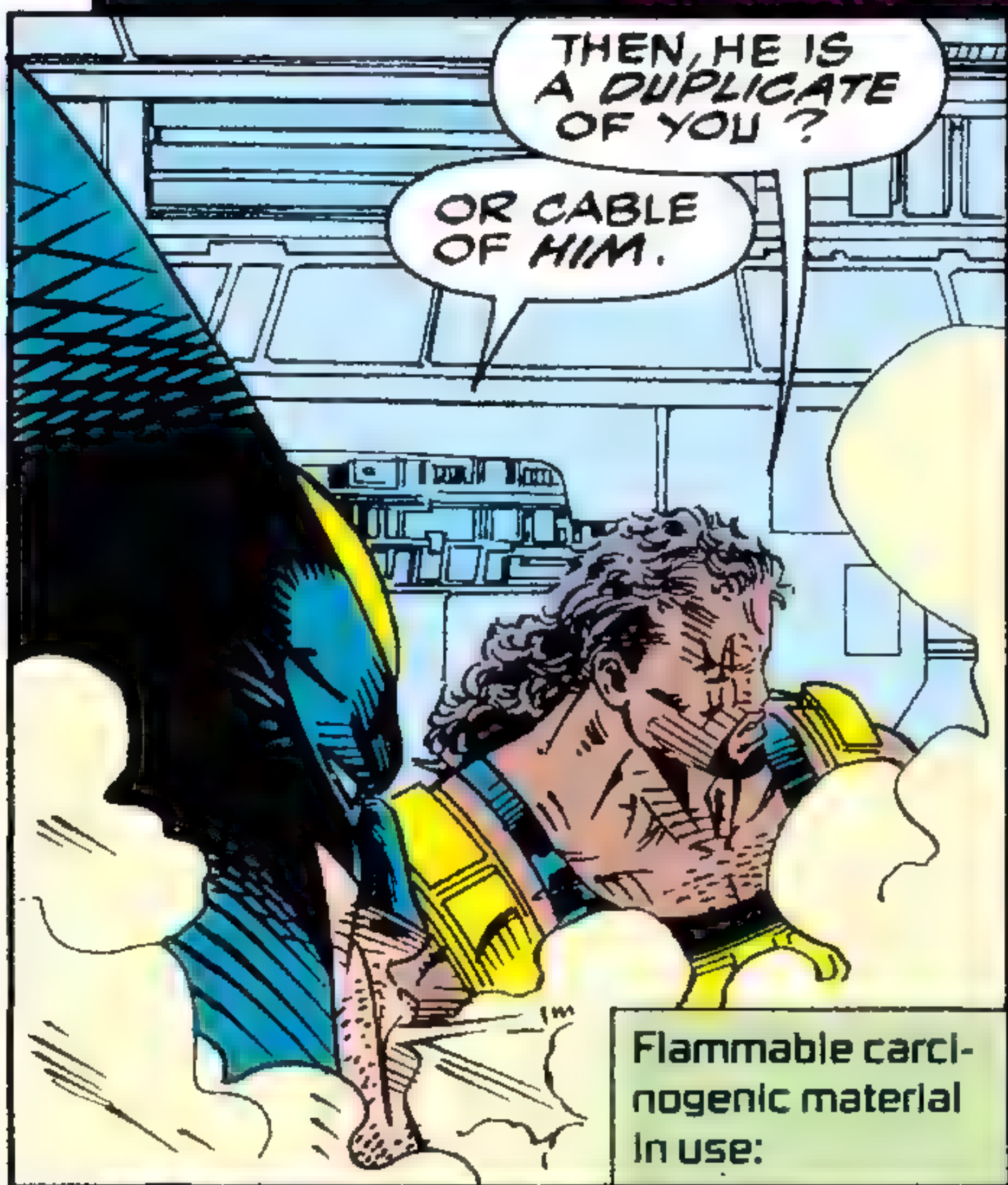
INSIDE



AND WHAT WAS THAT?

"I FOUND OUT SOMETHING THAT KANE--WEAPON X--SAID WAS TRUE--"

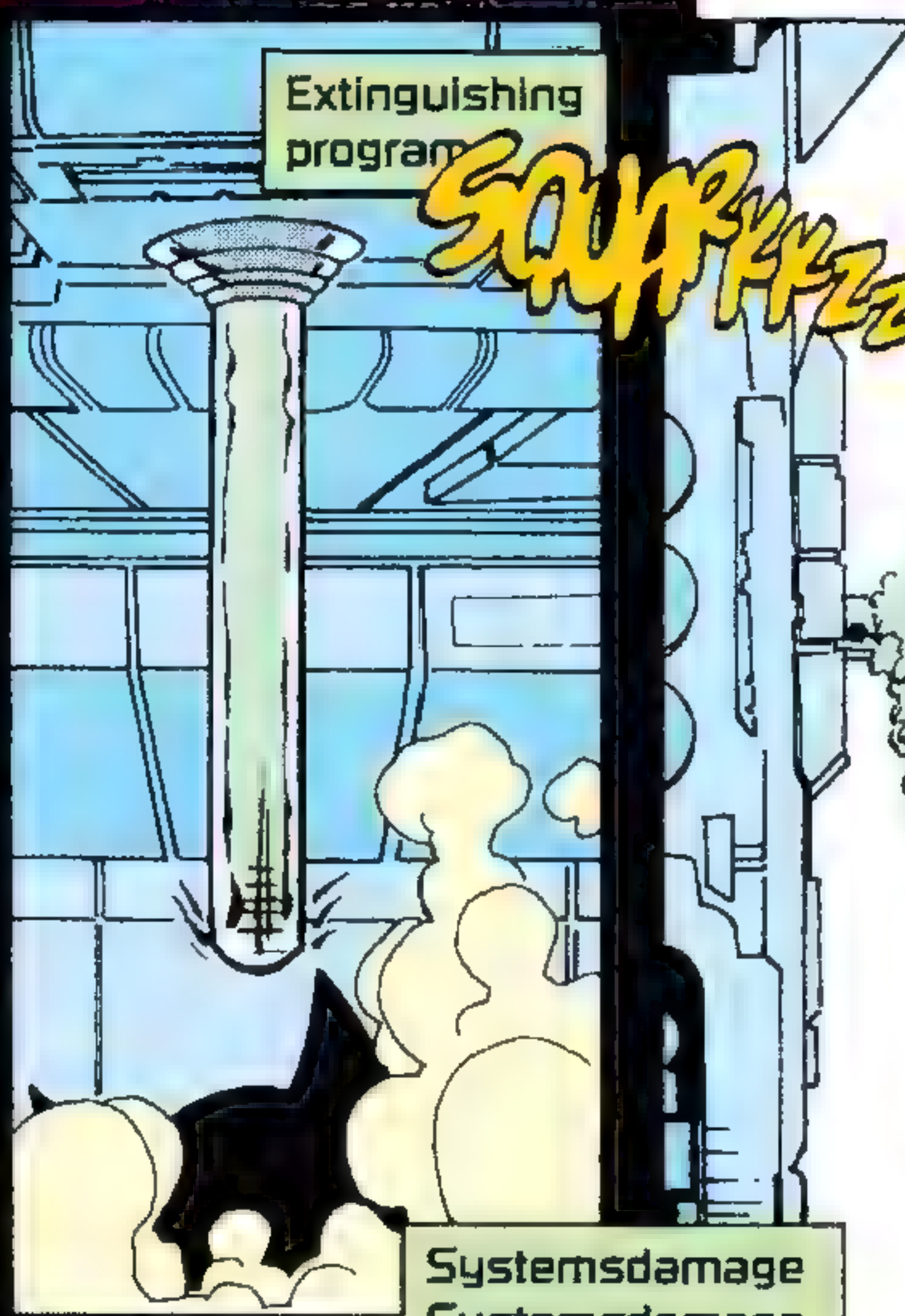
"-- THAT UNDER-NEATH HIS HELMET--STRYFE WEARS MY FACE!"



THEN, HE IS A DUPLICATE OF YOU?

OR CABLE OF HIM.

Flammable carcinogenic material in use:

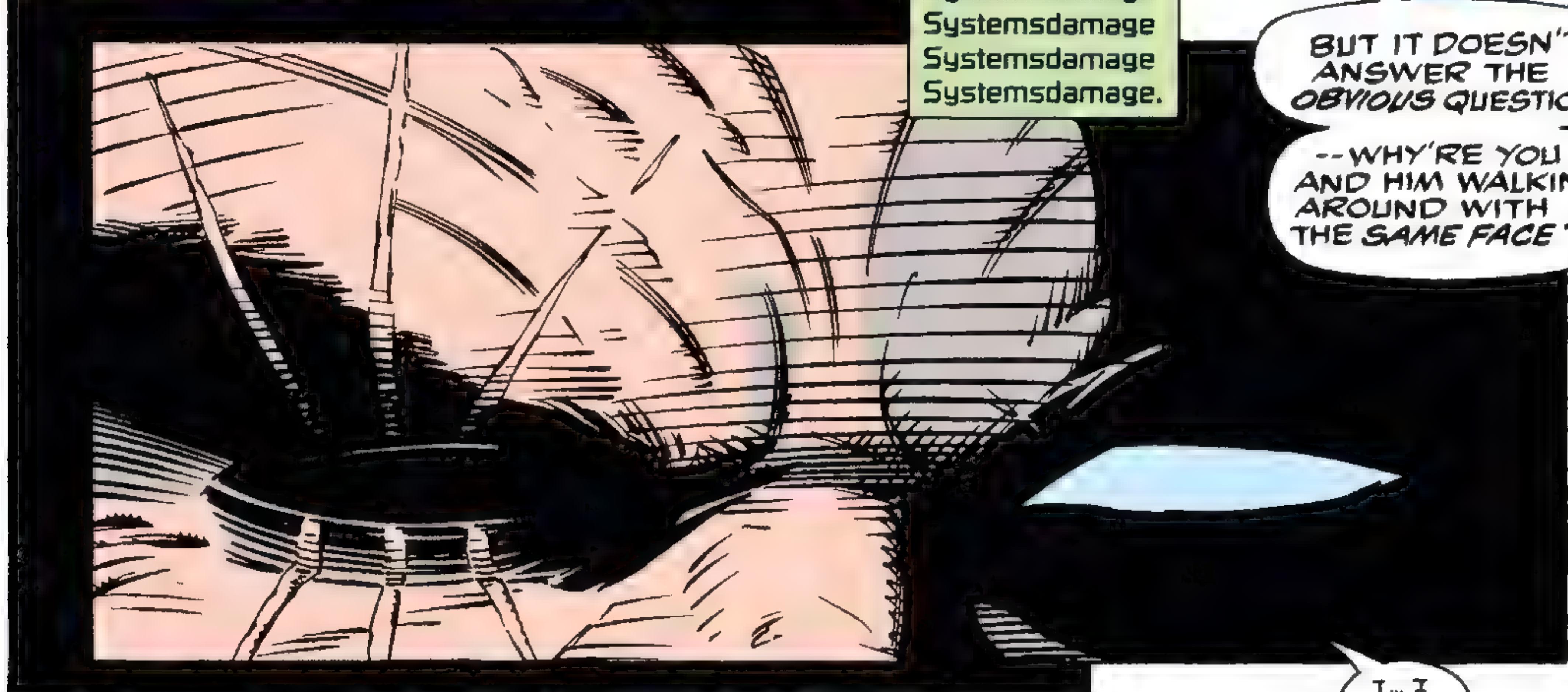


Extinguishing program

Systemsdamage
Systemsdamage
Systemsdamage
Systemsdamage
Systemsdamage.



WHICH WOULD EXPLAIN HOW STRYFE IMPERSONATED CABLE WHEN HE SHOT CHUCK.



BUT IT DOESN'T ANSWER THE OBVIOUS QUESTION--

-- WHY'RE YOU AND HIM WALKIN' AROUND WITH THE SAME FACE?

I... I DON'T KNOW...

XAVIER'S MANSION,
OUTSIDE OF SALEM'S
CENTER, WESTCHESTER,
NEW YORK.

LOOKIN' MORE 'N
MORE LIKE AN
EPISODE A'
M*A*S*H, HUH?

WITHOUT THE
LAUGH TRACK,
I HOPE, SAM.

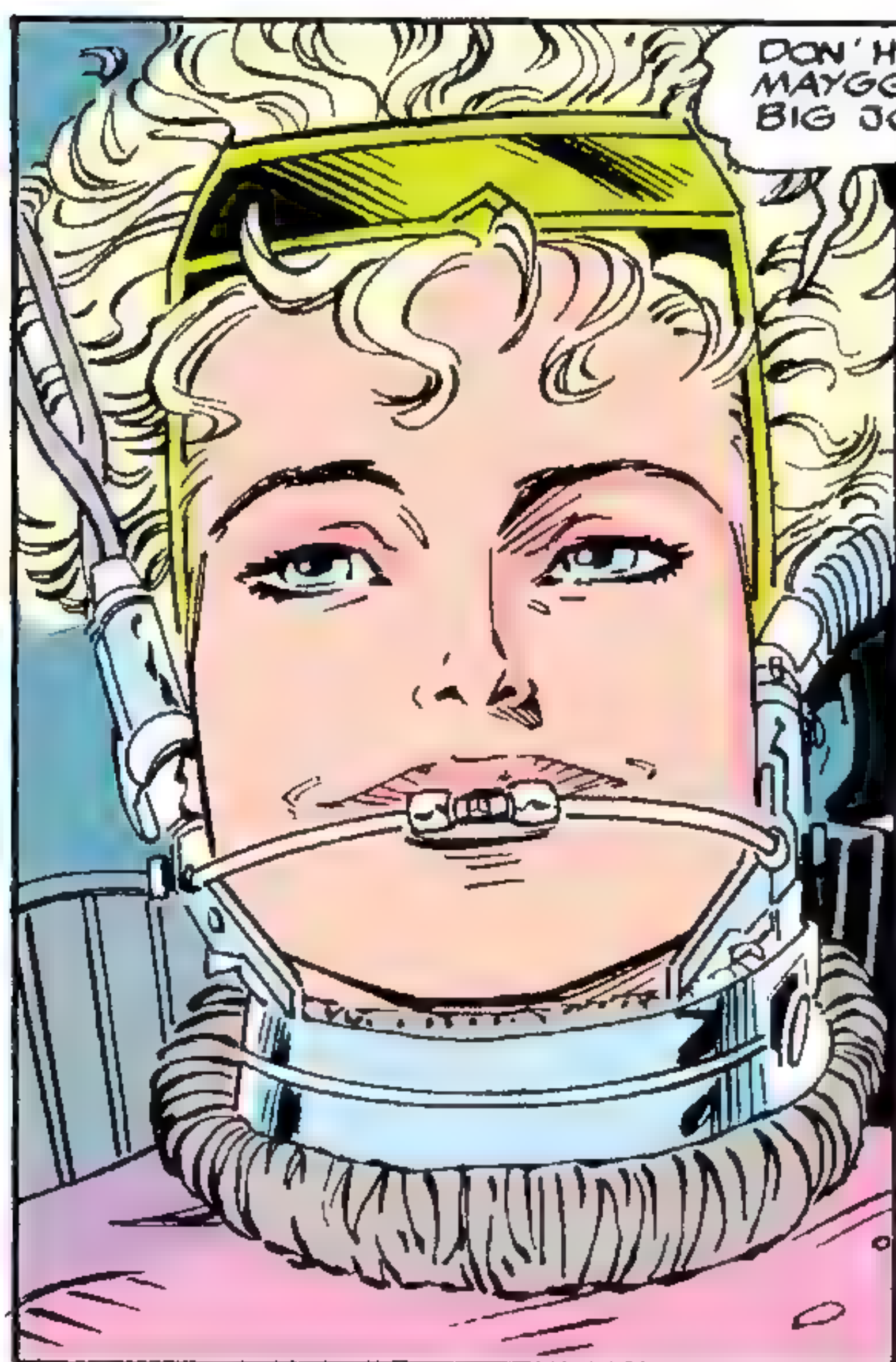
YEAH, STEVIE,
WELL, WE DID
A NUMBER ON
THE MLF, ALL
RIGHT--

-- BUT THEY
SURE DID ONE
ON US TOO!

GAMBIT, ROGUE,
AN' QUICKSILVER'RE
OUTTA THE FIGHT--

-- AND BOOMER
ACTUALLY GOT A
BROKEN JAW!

HOW
YOU DOIN',
TIGER?



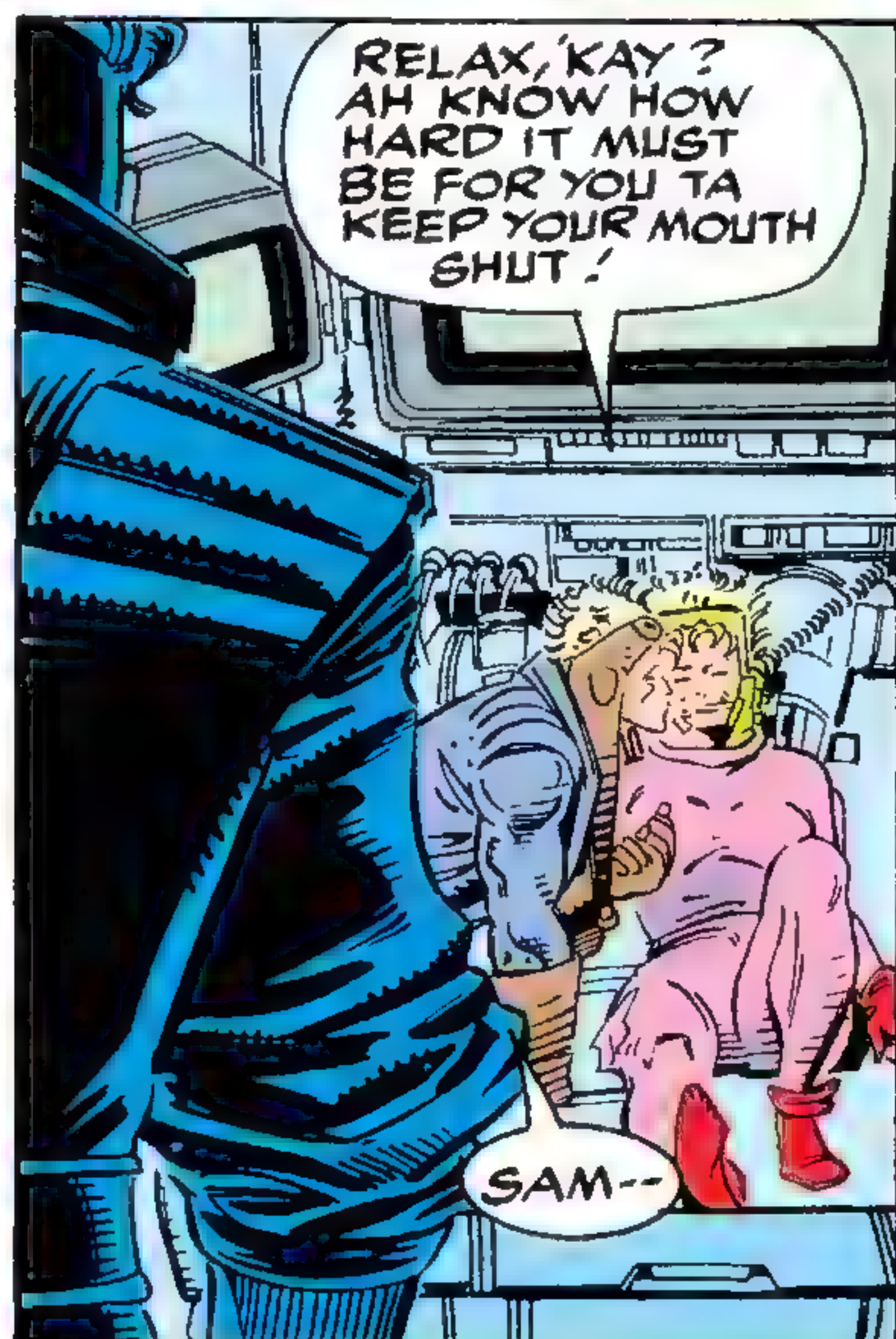
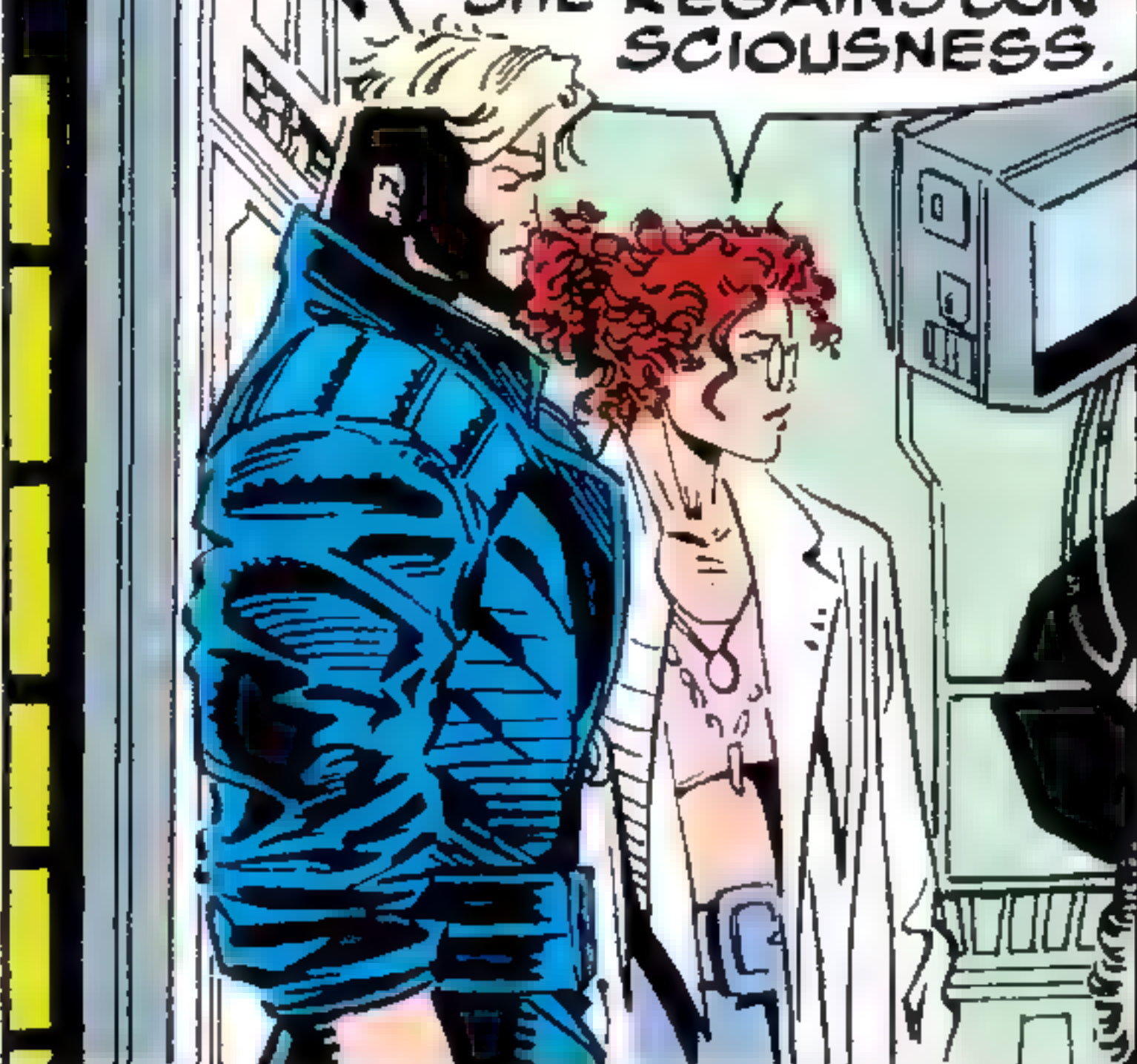
DON' HAFFTA
MAYGG ID A
BIG JOGGE!

STABLE. MOSTLY
CONCUSSIONS.

STEVIE,
HOW'S
EVERYONE
HOLDING
UP?

IT'S ROGUE I'M
WORRIED ABOUT,
ALEX.

WE WON'T KNOW
HOW MUCH RETINAL
DAMAGE STROBE
DID TO HER UNTIL
SHE REGAINS CON-
SCIOUSNESS.



RELAX, KAY?
AH KNOW HOW
HARD IT MUST
BE FOR YOU TA
KEEP YOUR MOUTH
SHUT!

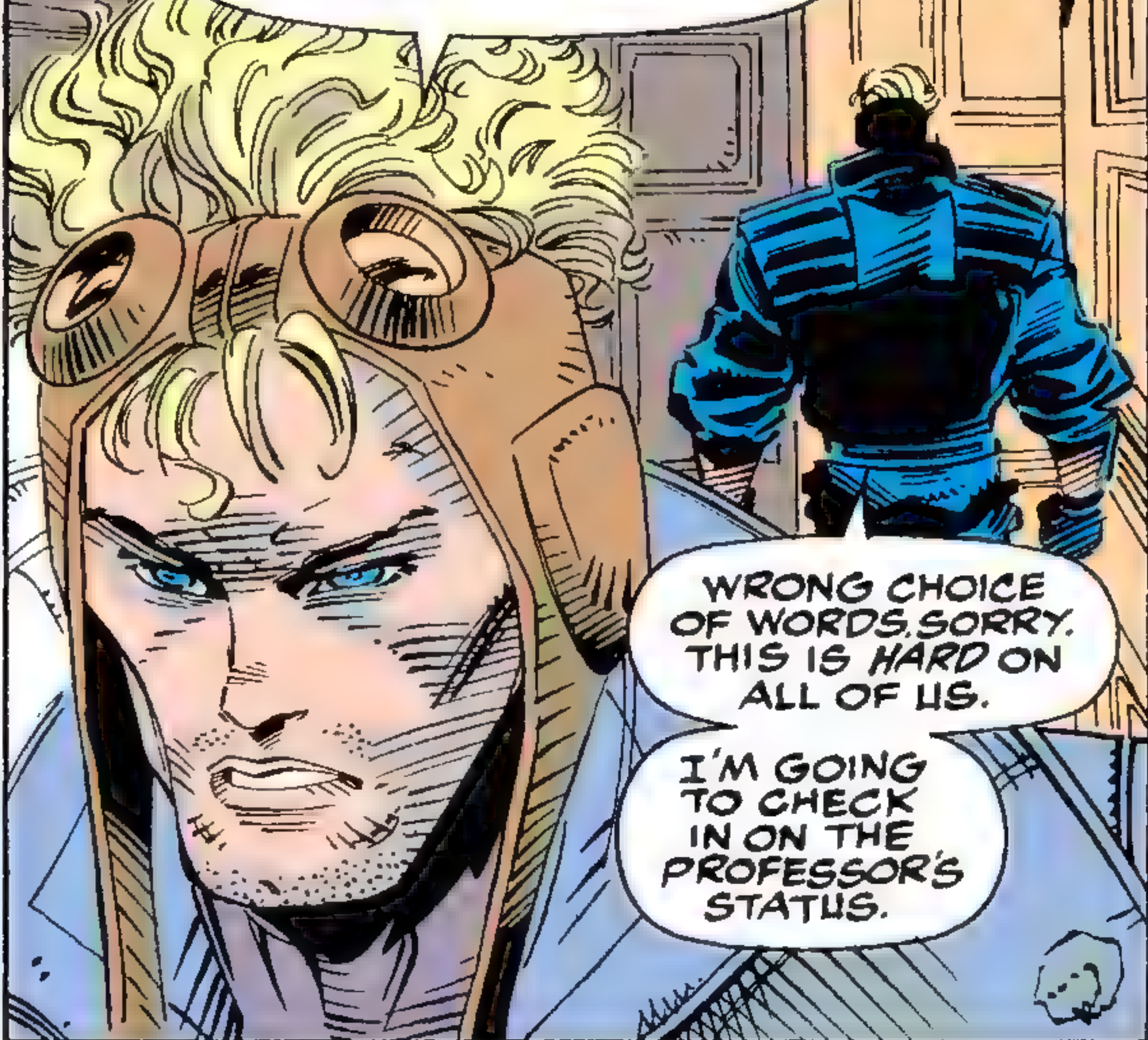
SAM--

-- COULD YOU DO
A WALK THROUGH
THE DANGER
ROOM?

SOME OF YOUR
"TROOPS" HAVE
BEEN ACTING
UP.



FINE. WOULDN'T WANT ANY OF
MAH "SOLDIERS" "ACTING
UP" NOW, WOULD WE?



WRONG CHOICE
OF WORDS. SORRY.
THIS IS HARD ON
ALL OF US.

I'M GOING
TO CHECK
IN ON THE
PROFESSOR'S
STATUS.

VAL, ORORO--
ANYTHING YET--?

ONLY
BAD NEWS,
I FEAR.

THE VIRUS HAS
SPREAD THROUGH-
OUT VIRTUALLY HIS
ENTIRE BODY.

MOIRA AND HANK
HAVE DECIDED THAT
THEY MUST STOP THE
TECHNO-ORGANIC
MESH FROM CO-
OPTING CHARLES' IN-
TERNAL ORGANS.

BUT THAT WAS
SMACK IN THE
MIDDLE OF HIS
HEAD!

THEY'RE GOING
TO ATTEMPT TO
REMOVE THE
VIRUS FROM ITS
CORE--

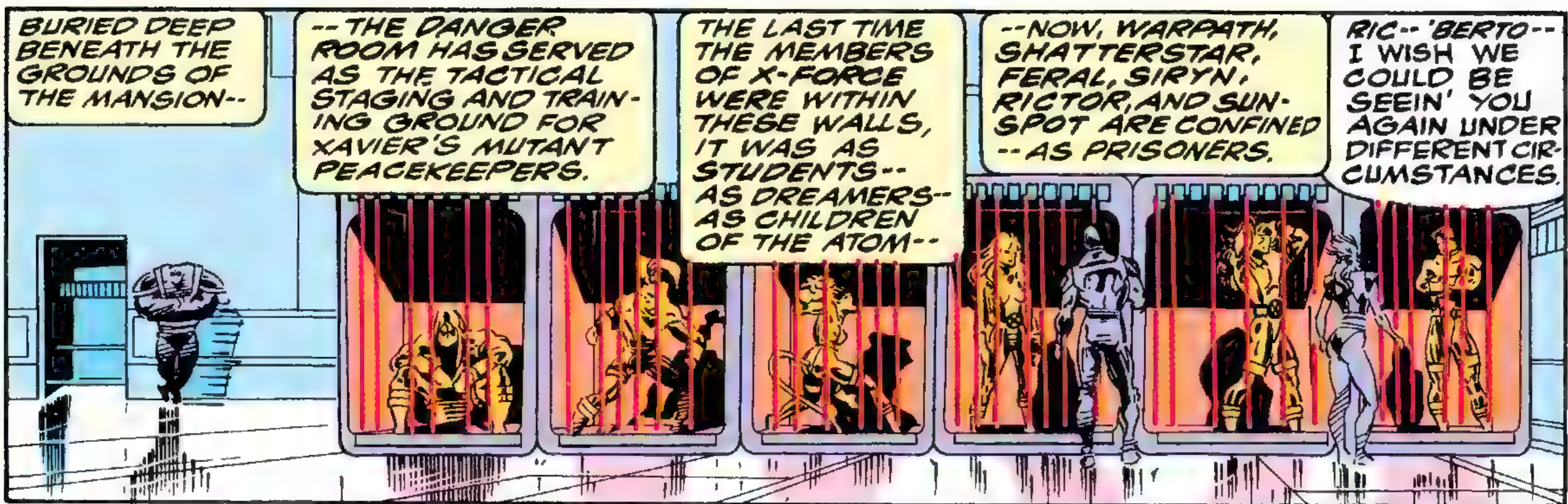
-- THE POINT
AT WHICH IT
FIRST ENTERED
HIS BODY.

ISN'T THIS KIND OF
A DESPERATE
MOVE HERE?

AT THIS
POINT, ALEX.

... DESPERATE
METHODS--

-- MAY BE THE
ONLY ONES
CHARLES HAS
LEFT!



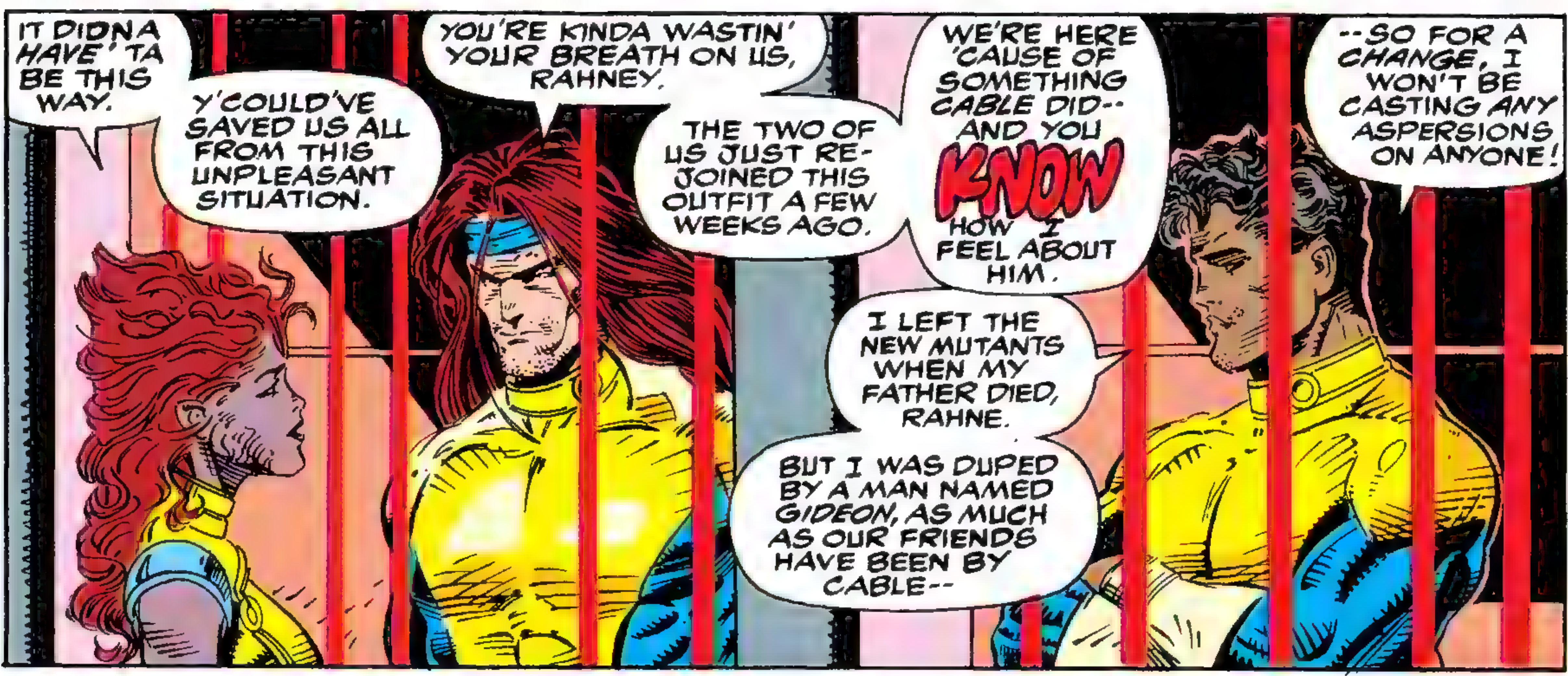
BURIED DEEP BENEATH THE GROUNDS OF THE MANSION--

-- THE DANGER ROOM HAS SERVED AS THE TACTICAL STAGING AND TRAINING GROUND FOR XAVIER'S MUTANT PEACEKEEPERS.

THE LAST TIME THE MEMBERS OF X-FORCE WERE WITHIN THESE WALLS, IT WAS AS STUDENTS-- AS DREAMERS-- AS CHILDREN OF THE ATOM--

--NOW, WARPATH, SHATTERSTAR, FERAL, SIRYN, RICTOR, AND SUNSPOT ARE CONFINED -- AS PRISONERS.

RIC-- 'BERTO-- I WISH WE COULD BE SEEIN' YOU AGAIN UNDER DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES.



IT DIDNA HAVE 'TA BE THIS WAY.

Y'COULD'VE SAVED US ALL FROM THIS UNPLEASANT SITUATION.

YOU'RE KINDA WASTIN' YOUR BREATH ON US, RAHNEY.

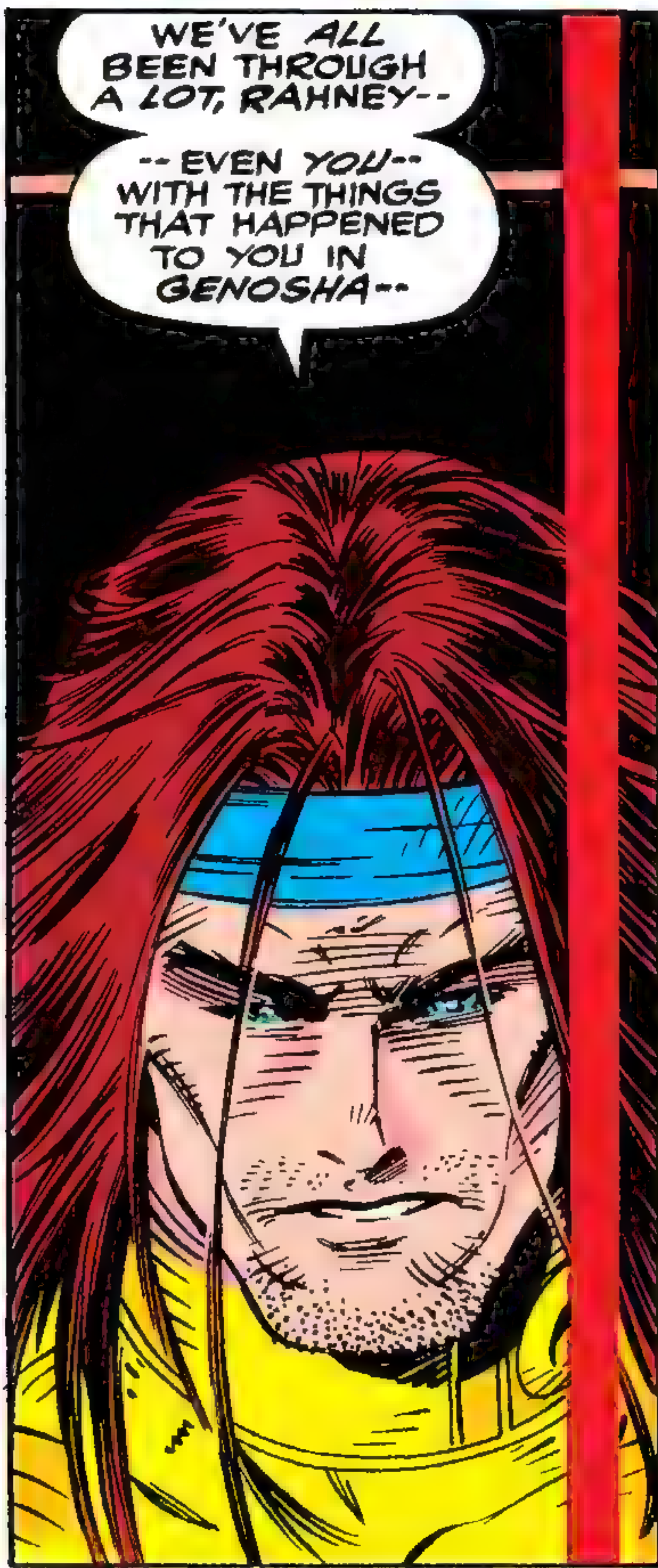
THE TWO OF US JUST RE-JOINED THIS OUTFIT A FEW WEEKS AGO.

WE'RE HERE 'CAUSE OF SOMETHING CABLE DID-- AND YOU **KNOW** HOW I FEEL ABOUT HIM.

--SO FOR A CHANGE, I WON'T BE CASTING ANY ASPERSIONS ON ANYONE!

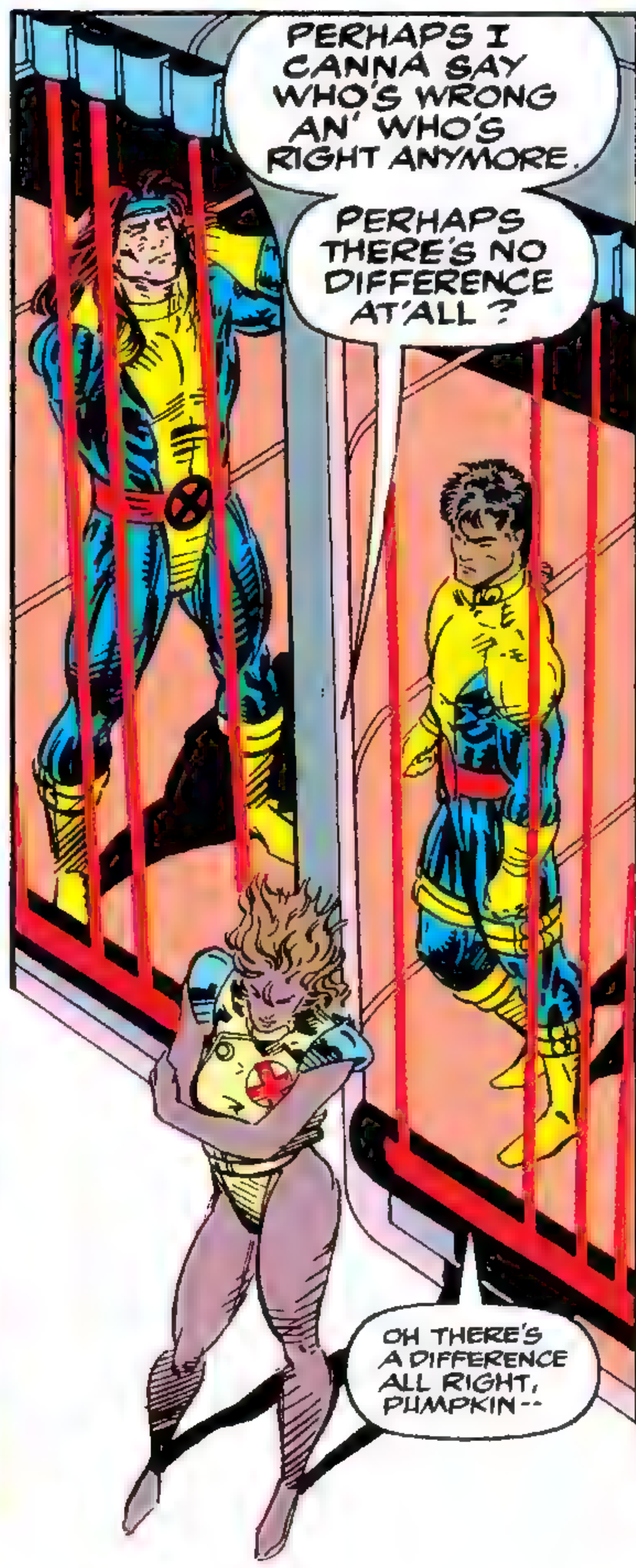
I LEFT THE NEW MUTANTS WHEN MY FATHER DIED, RAHNE.

BUT I WAS DUPED BY A MAN NAMED GIDEON, AS MUCH AS OUR FRIENDS HAVE BEEN BY CABLE--



WE'VE ALL BEEN THROUGH A LOT, RAHNEY--

-- EVEN YOU-- WITH THE THINGS THAT HAPPENED TO YOU IN GENOSHA--



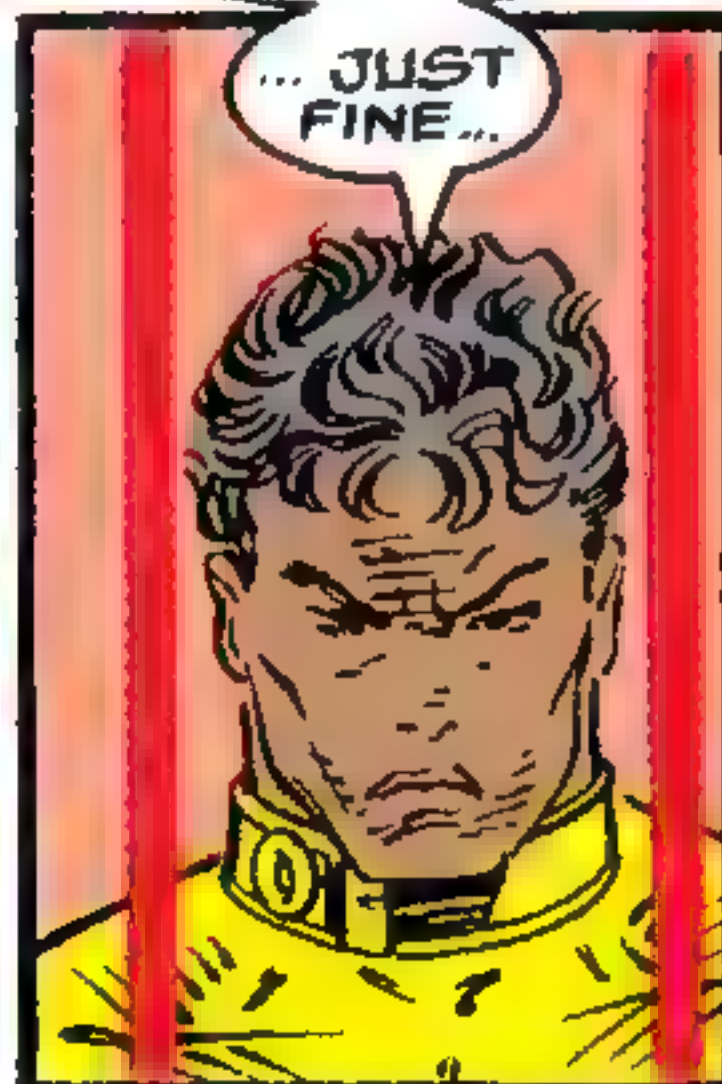
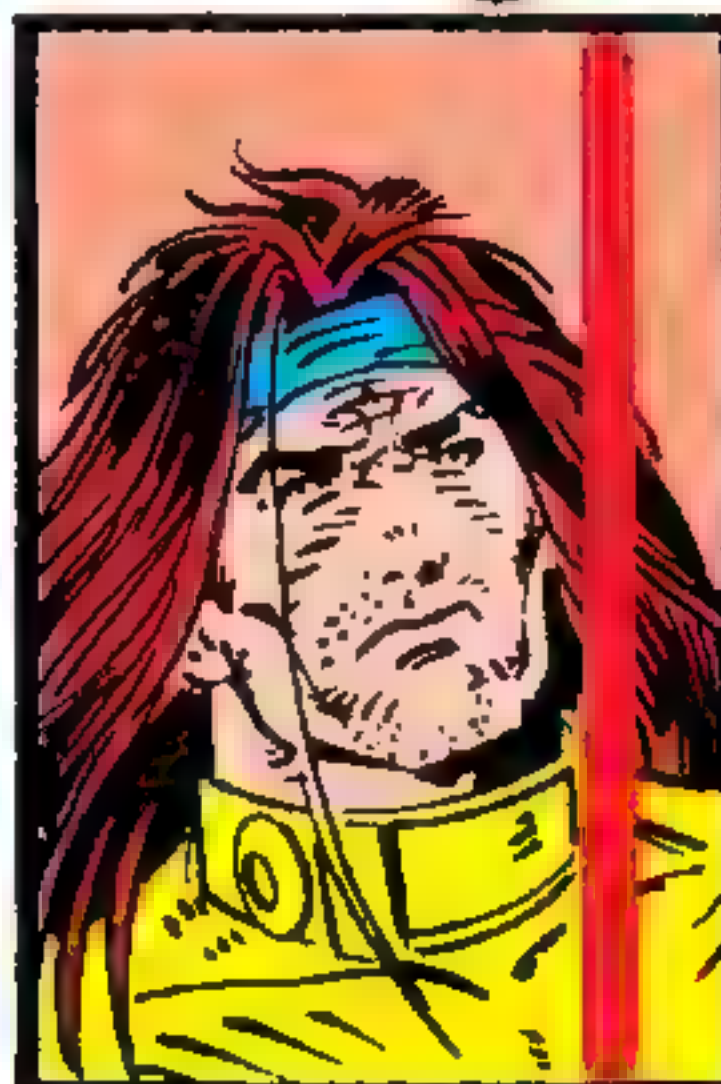
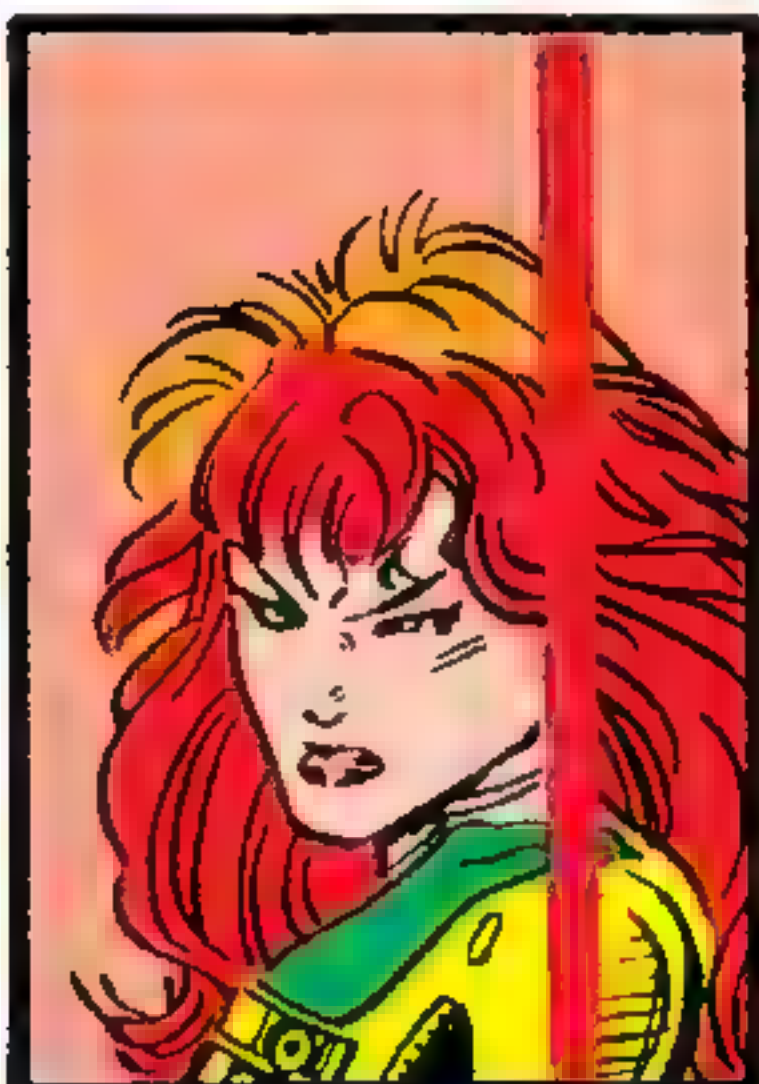
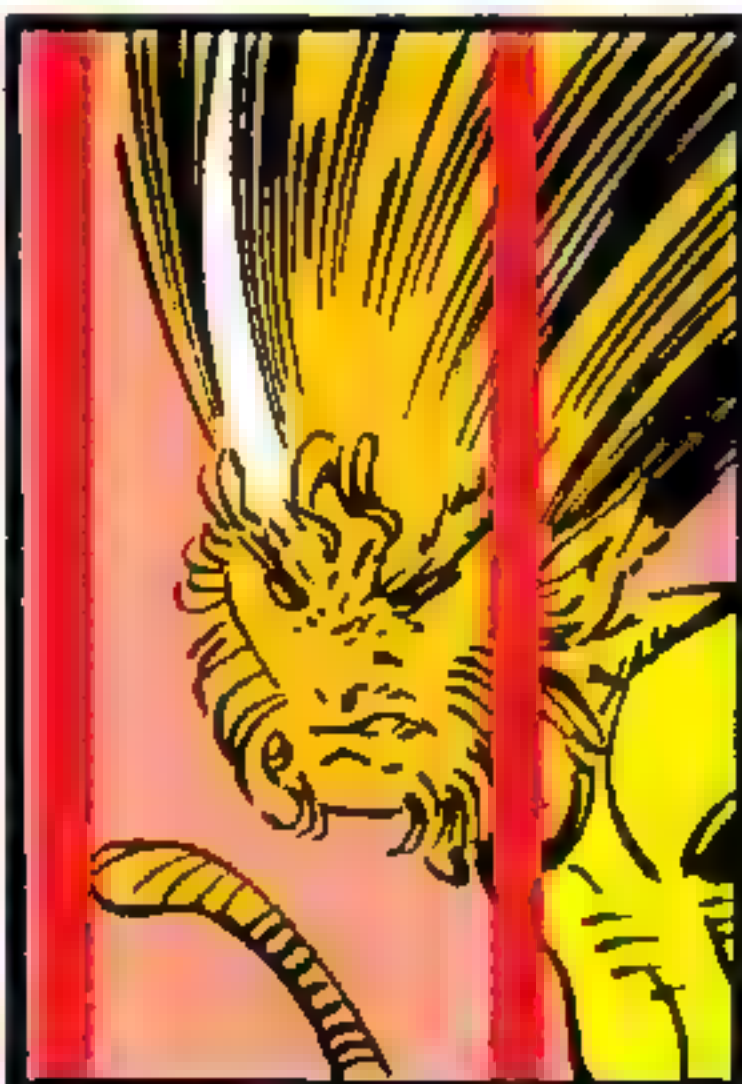
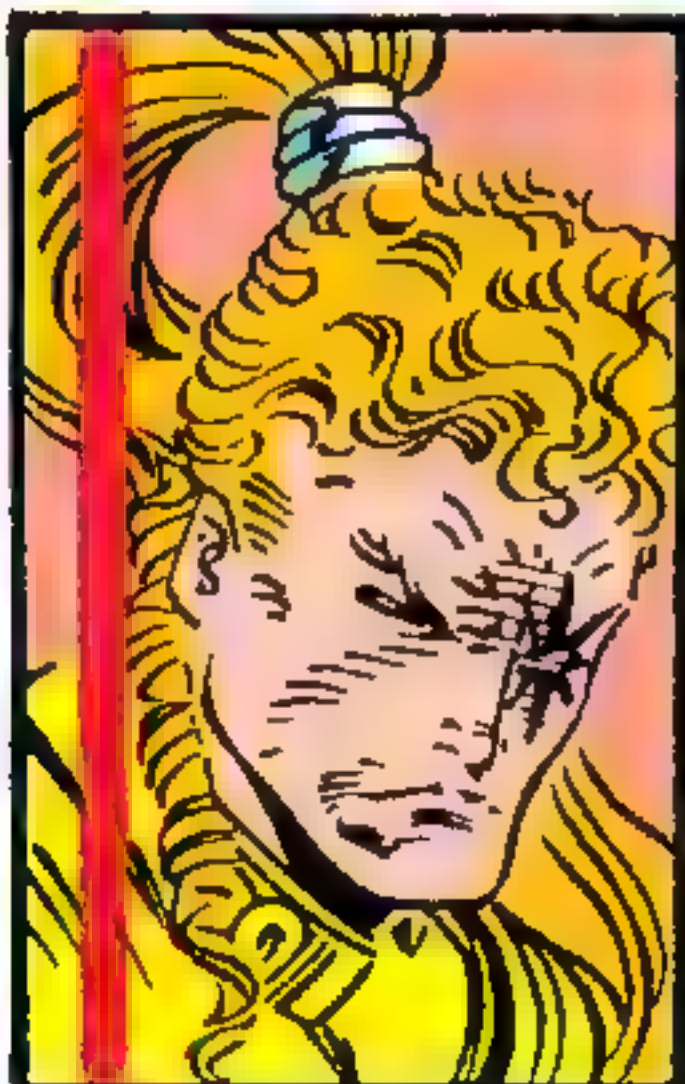
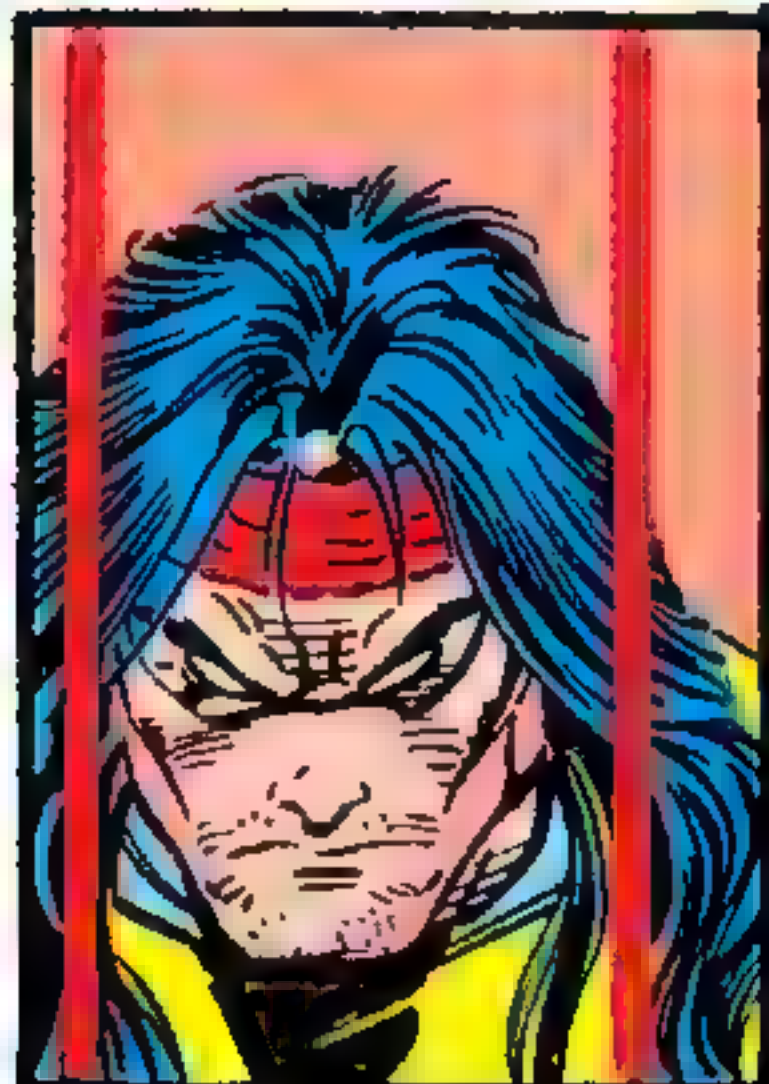
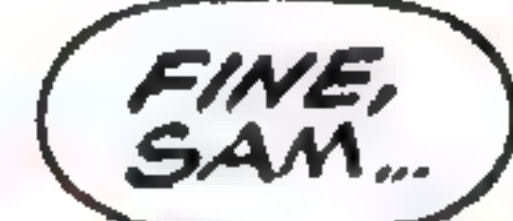
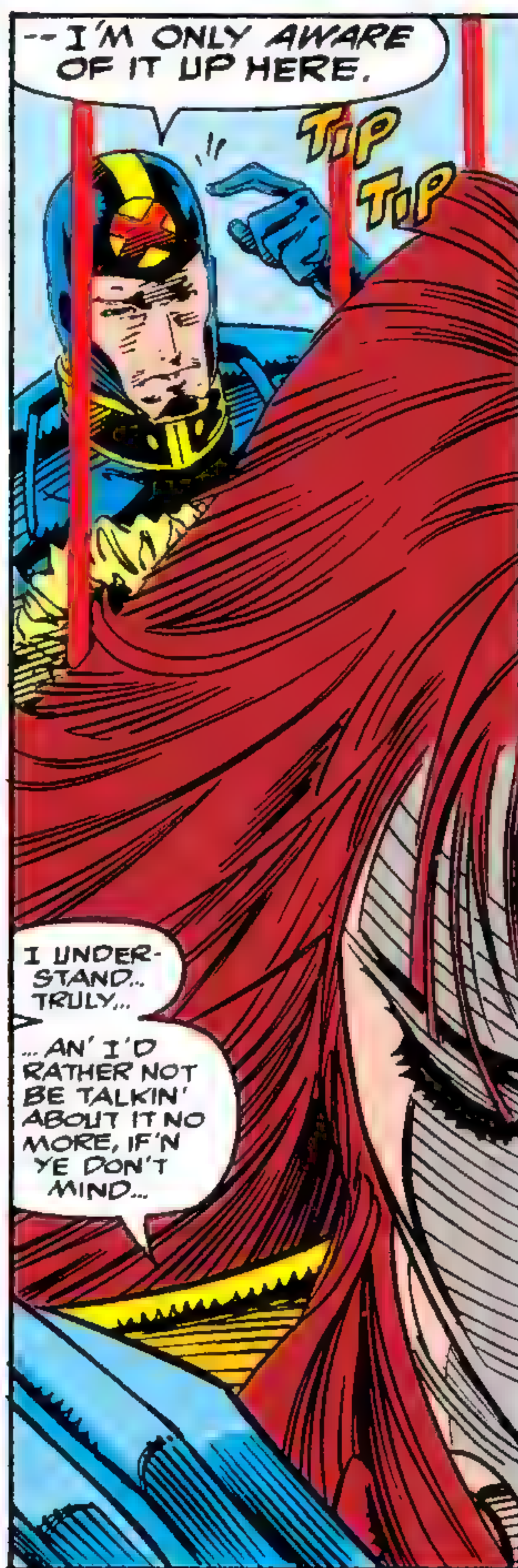
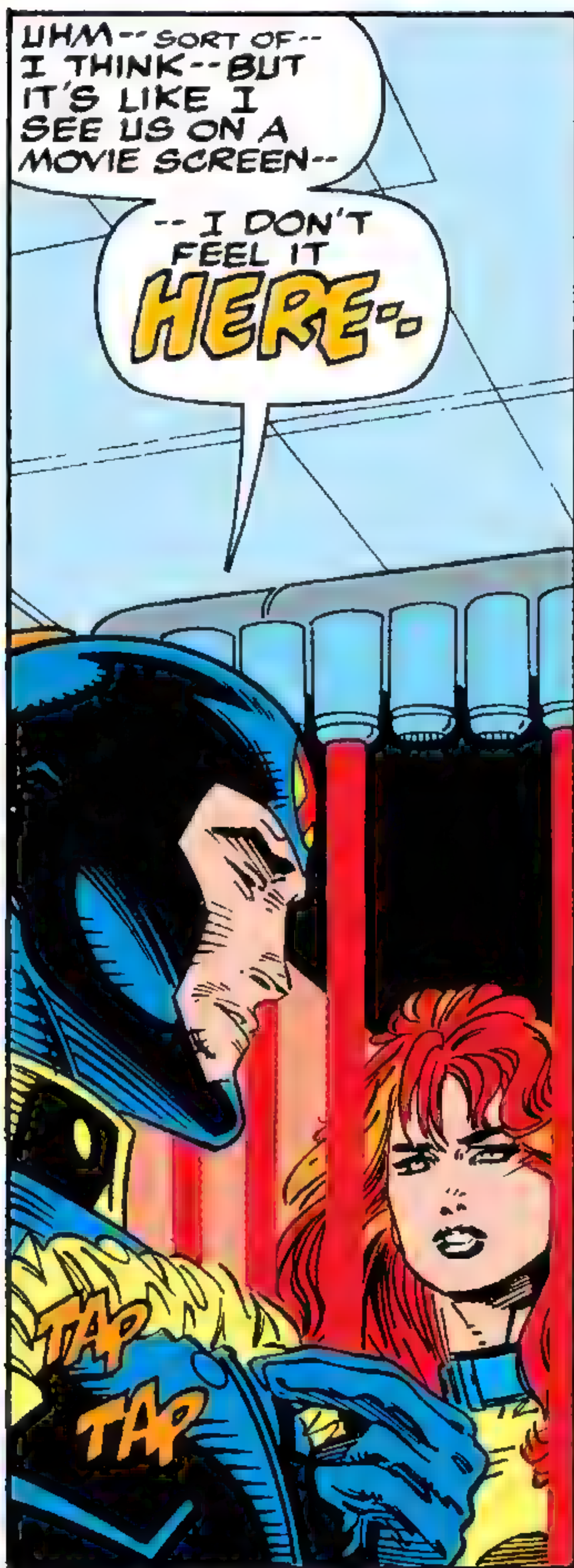
PERHAPS I CANNA SAY WHO'S WRONG AN' WHO'S RIGHT ANYMORE.

PERHAPS THERE'S NO DIFFERENCE AT'ALL?

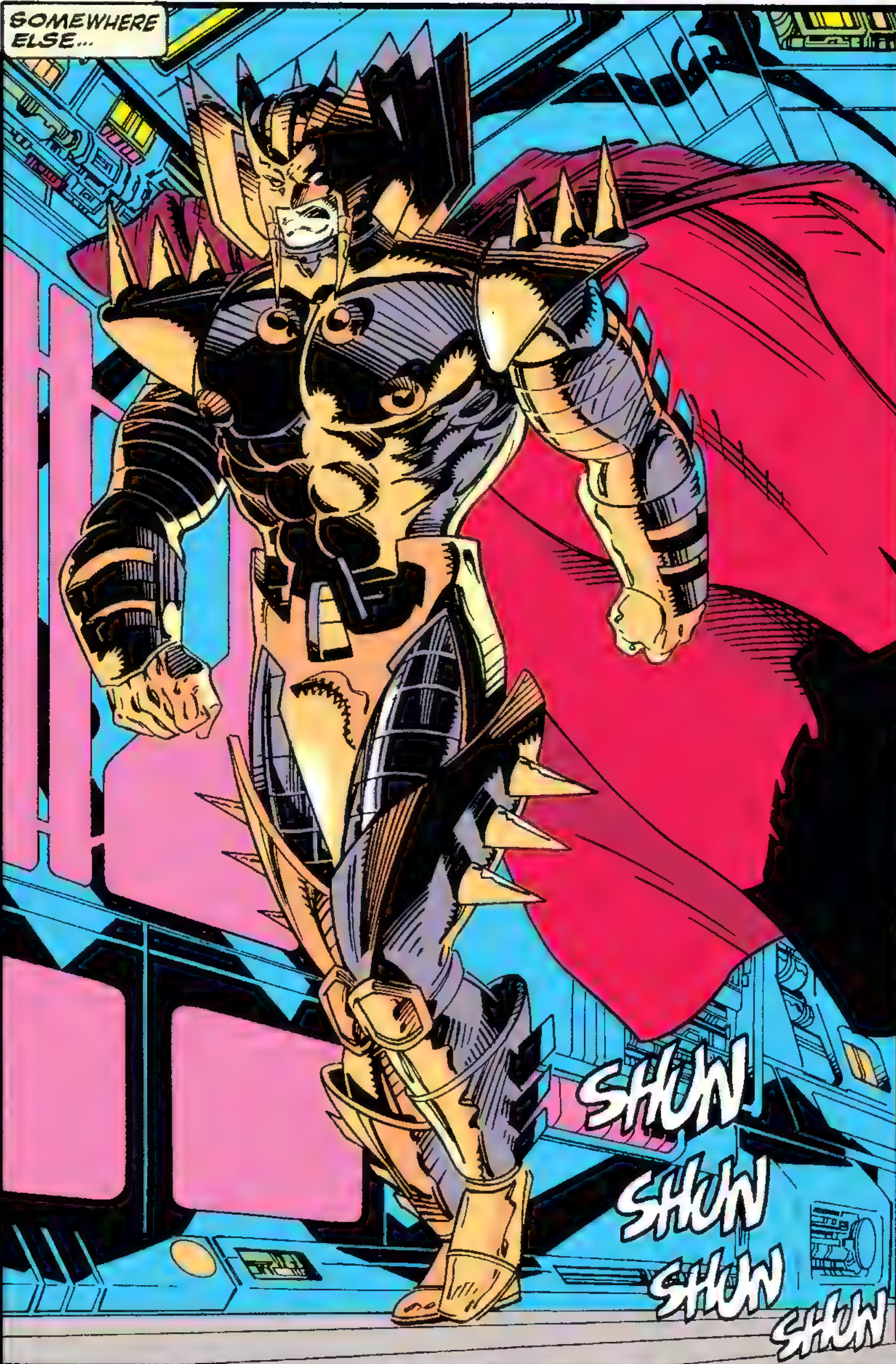
OH THERE'S A DIFFERENCE ALL RIGHT, PUMPKIN--



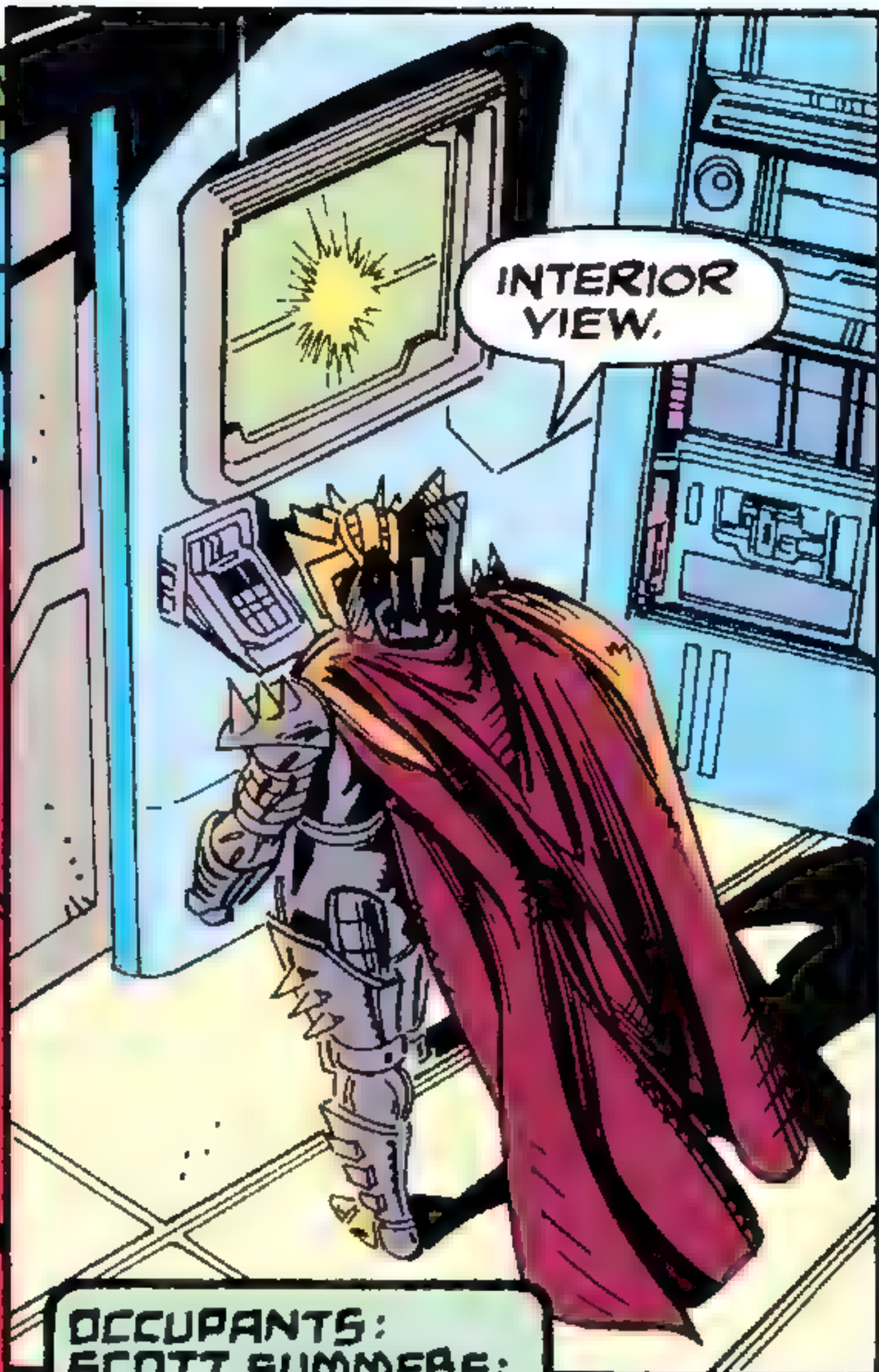
-- JUST DEPENDS ON WHICH SIDE OF THE BARS YOU'RE ON...



SOMEWHERE ELSE...



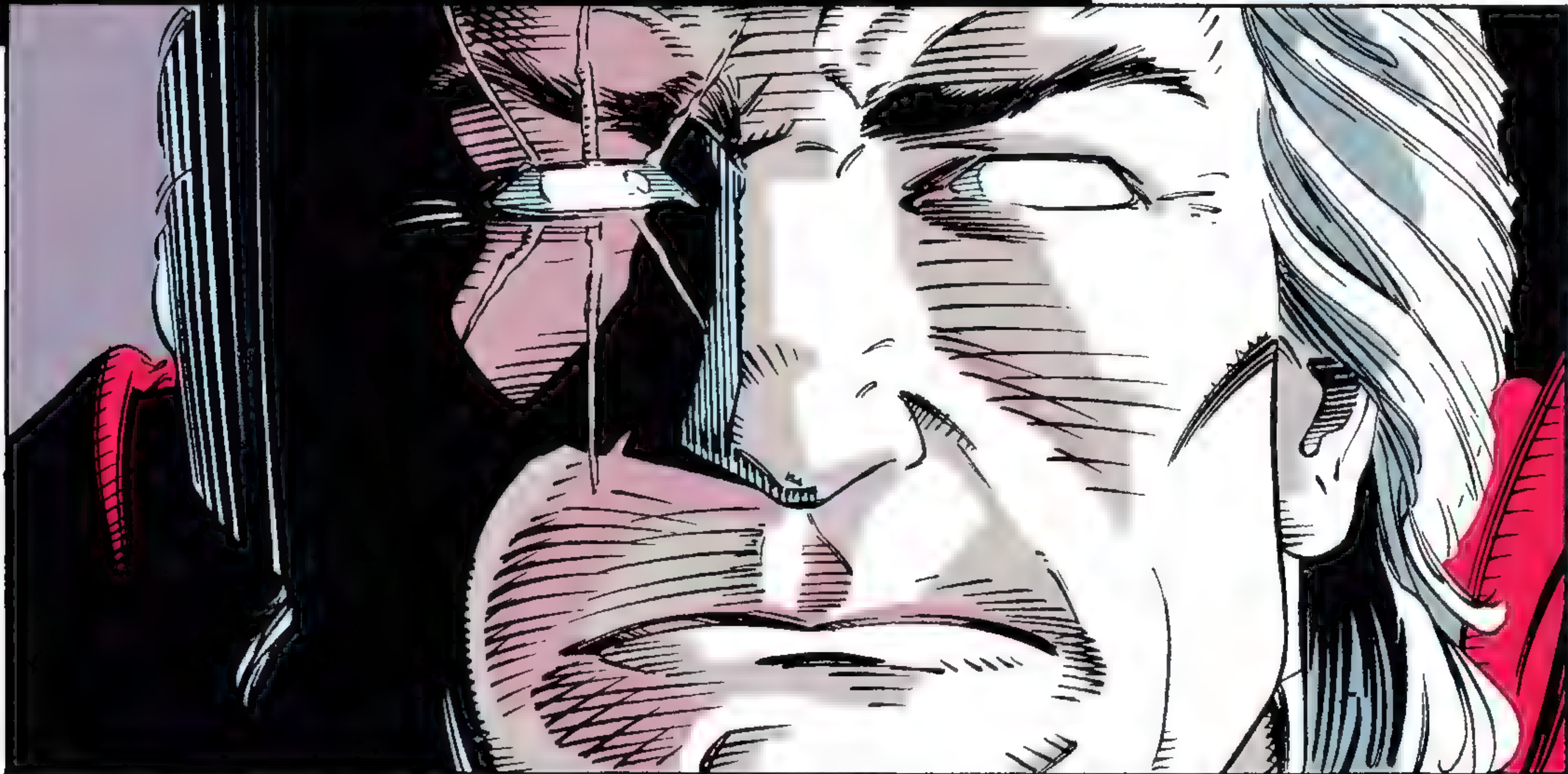
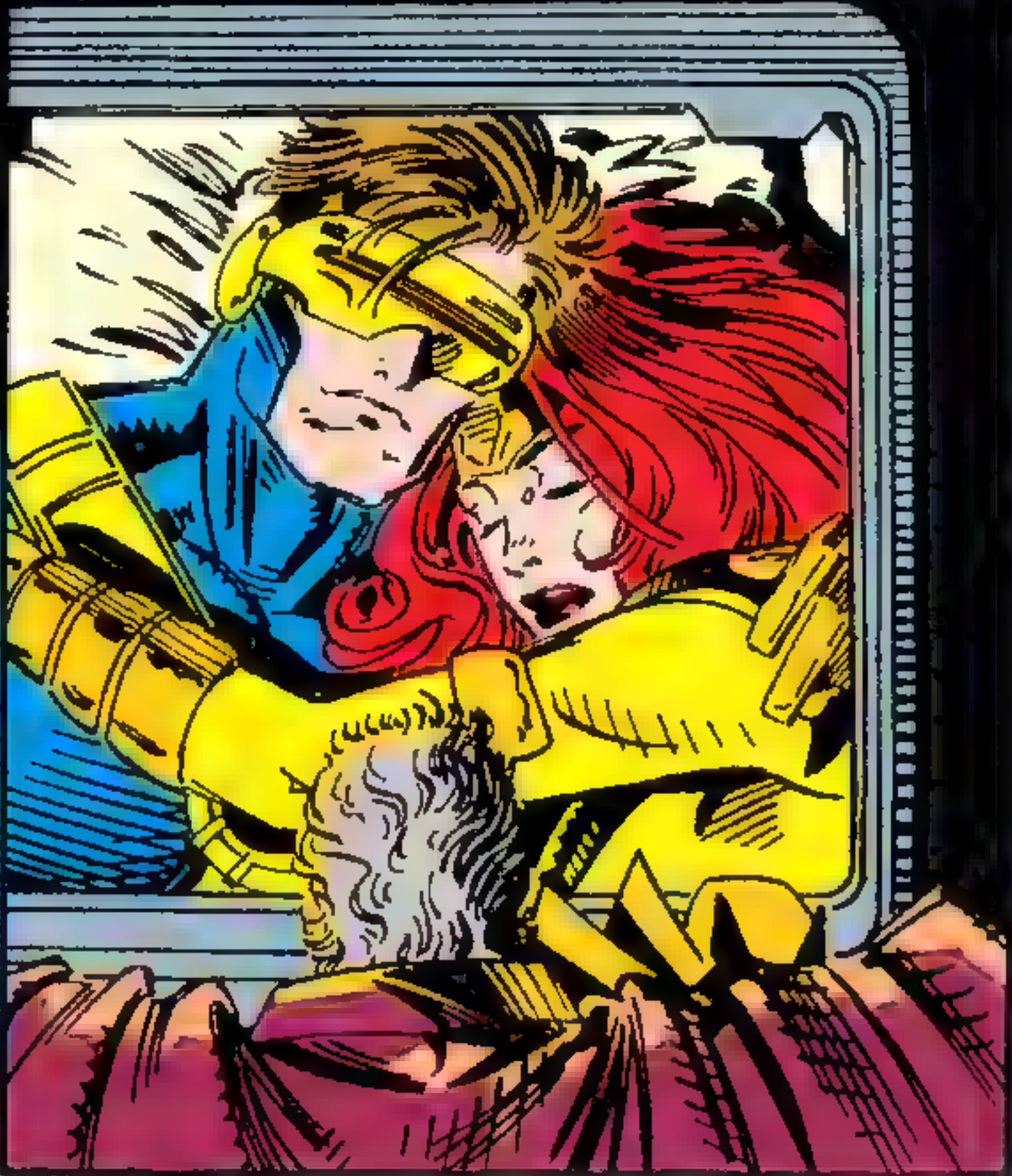
SHUN
SHUN
SHUN
SHUN

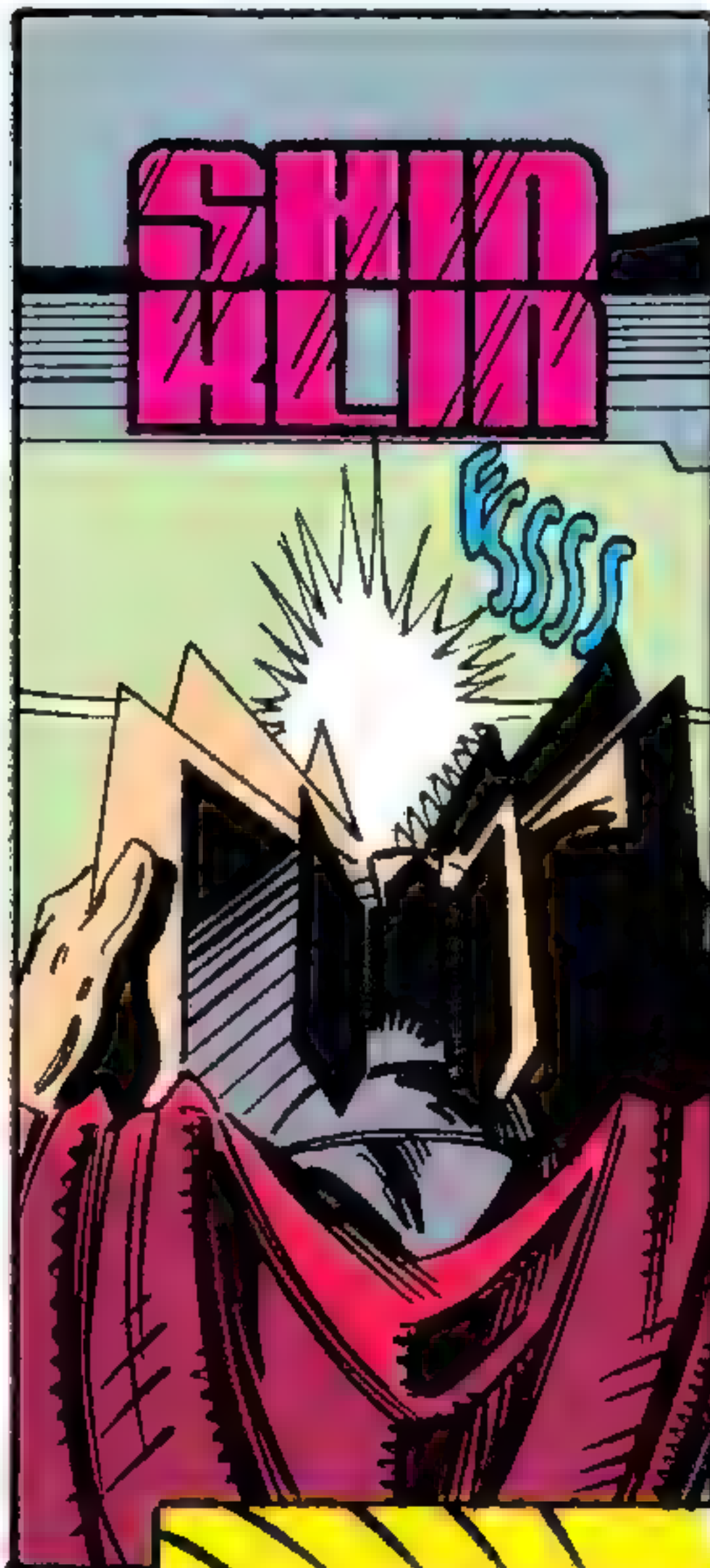


INTERIOR VIEW.

OCCUPANTS:
SCOTT SUMMERS:
CYCLOPS AND
JEAN GREY

CONDITION
STATUS:
NOMINAL





HE'S GONE.

ARE YOU READY?

DO YOU HAVE TO ASK?

ALL RIGHT, THEN...

UNTIL I WAS ABLE TO STEAL THE OUTER LOCK CODE SEQUENCE BY MIND-PROBING FORE-ARM EARLIER--

--WE ASSUMED THIS CELL HAD A MUTAGENIC DAMPENING FIELD.

BREEP

BREEP

FSHFSH

BUT THE TRUTH IS MORE FRIGHTENING, JEAN--

--IT'S BEEN STRYFE WHO HAS BEEN KEEPING OUR POWERS IN CHECK ALL ALONG!

IF HE'S A POWERFUL ENOUGH TELEKINETIC TO KEEP **YOUR** TEKE ABILITIES AT BAY--

-- WHAT CAN WE DO TO STOP HIM?

THE HARD WAY?

ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT, MAN O' MINE.

AND IF THAT'S THE ONLY ROAD TO TAKE, THERE'S NO ONE I'D RATHER HAVE AT MY SIDE.

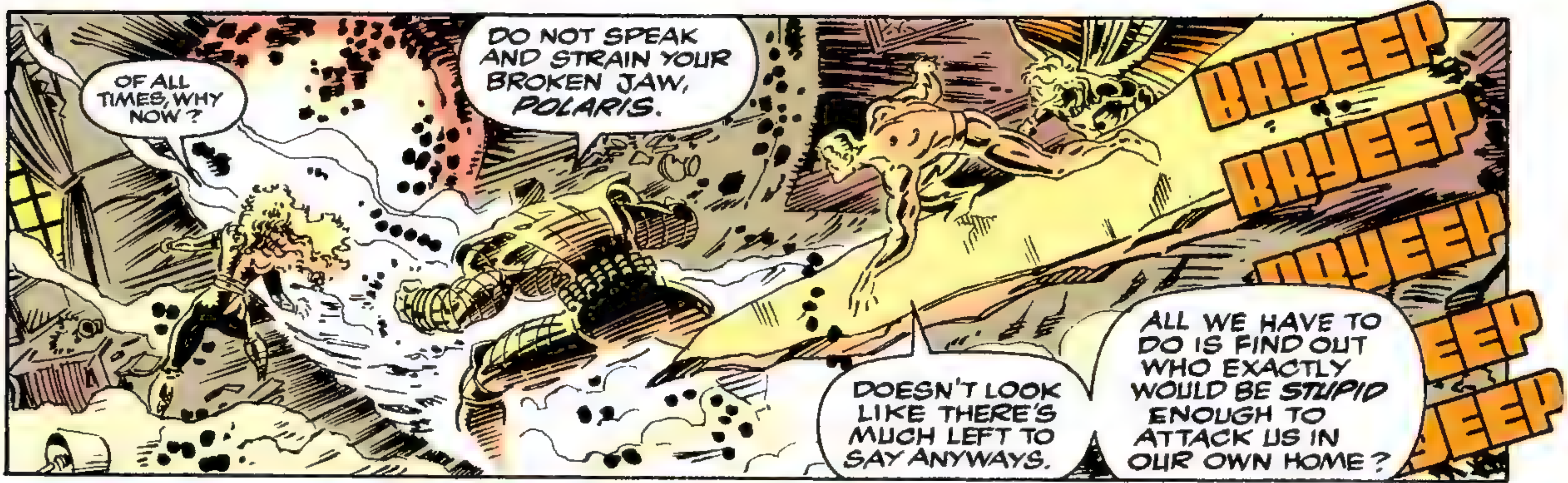
XAVIER'S MANSION..

VOOOOOOYEEESHAKOW!

BOIZE MOI! WHAT HIT US?!

WHATEVER IT WAS, PETEY-BOY--

-- I'LL BET YOU A BORSCHT BELT THAT IT TOOK OUT THE BIG-SCREEN TV!



OF ALL TIMES, WHY NOW?

DO NOT SPEAK AND STRAIN YOUR BROKEN JAW, POLARIS.

DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THERE'S MUCH LEFT TO SAY ANYWAYS.

ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS FIND OUT WHO EXACTLY WOULD BE STUPID ENOUGH TO ATTACK US IN OUR OWN HOME?

BYE! BYE! BYE! BYE! BYE!



FORTUNATELY FOR ALL OF US, ROBERT DRAKE...

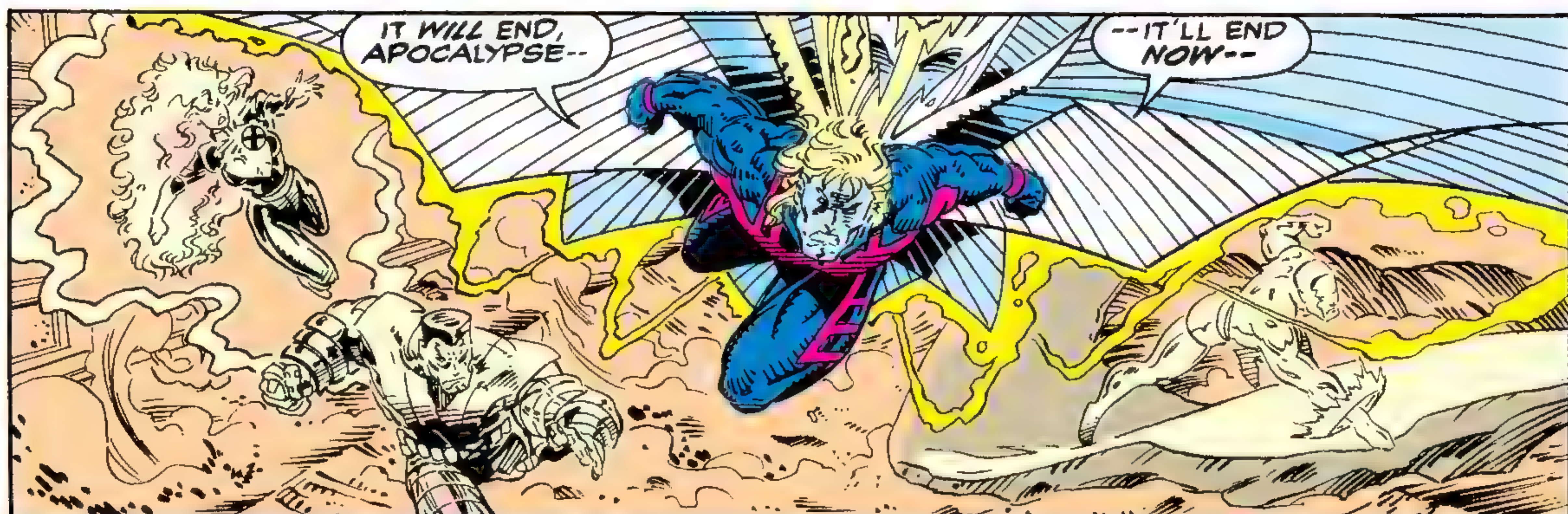
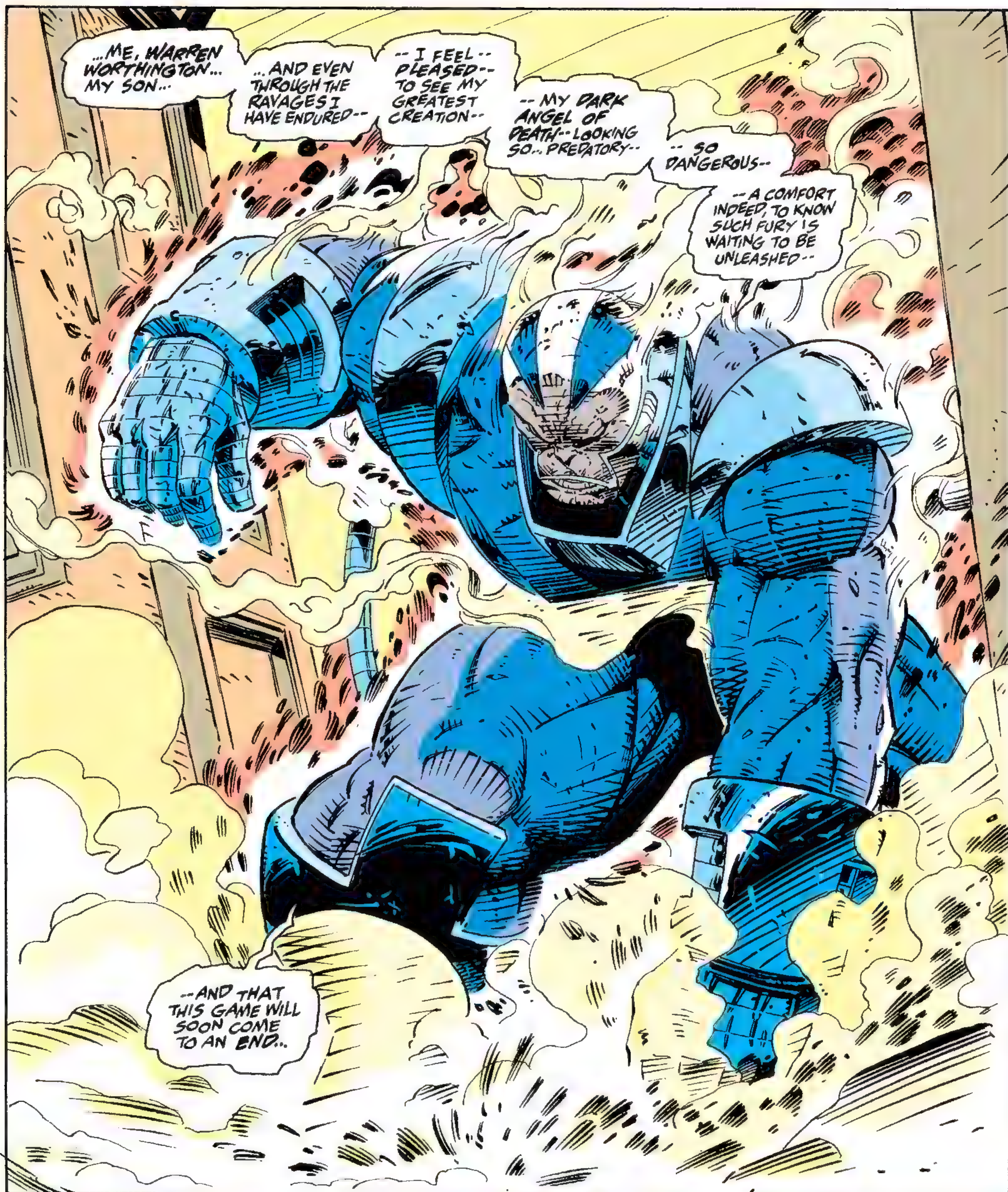
--THE ONE WHO IS HERE--

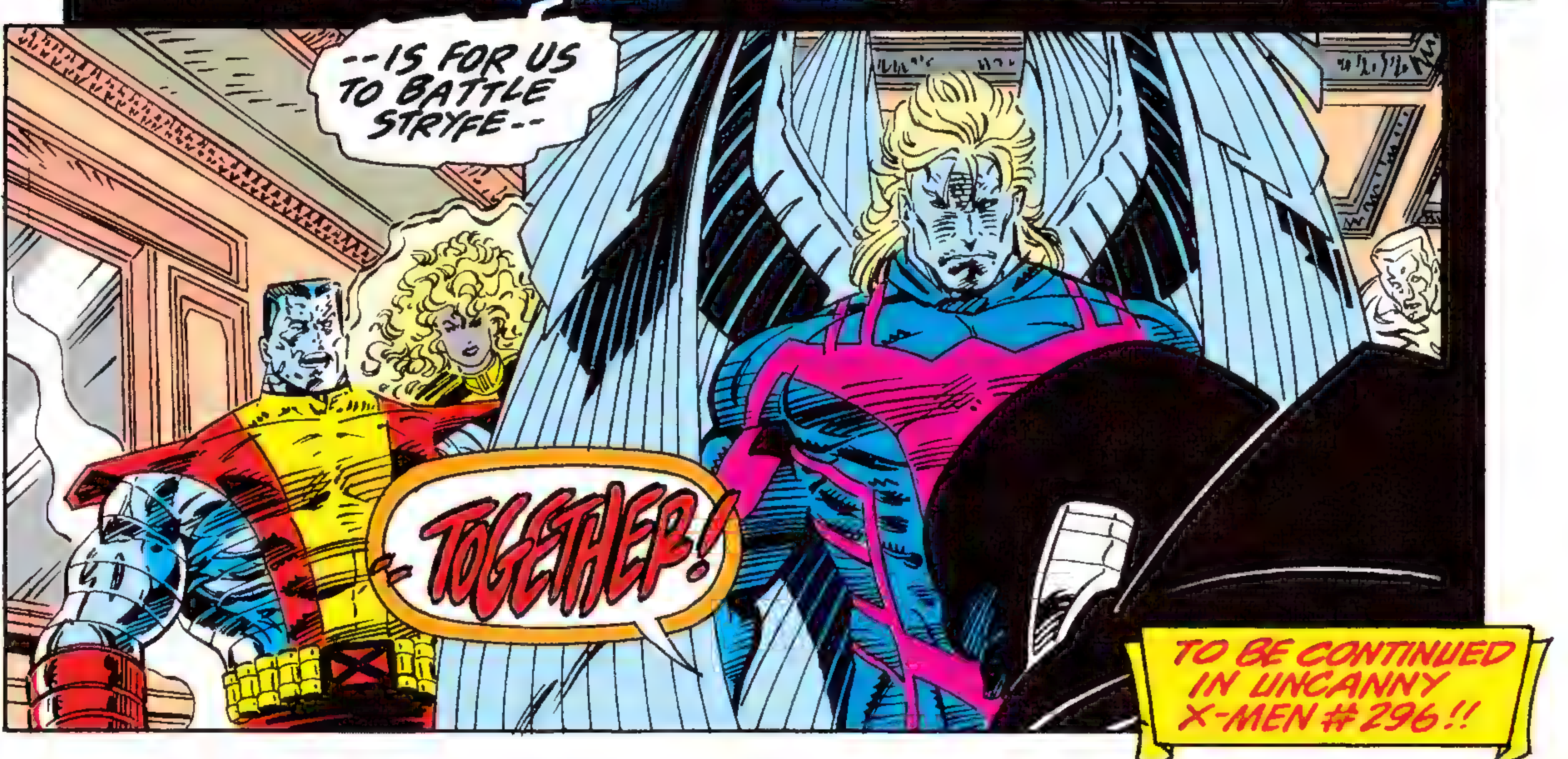
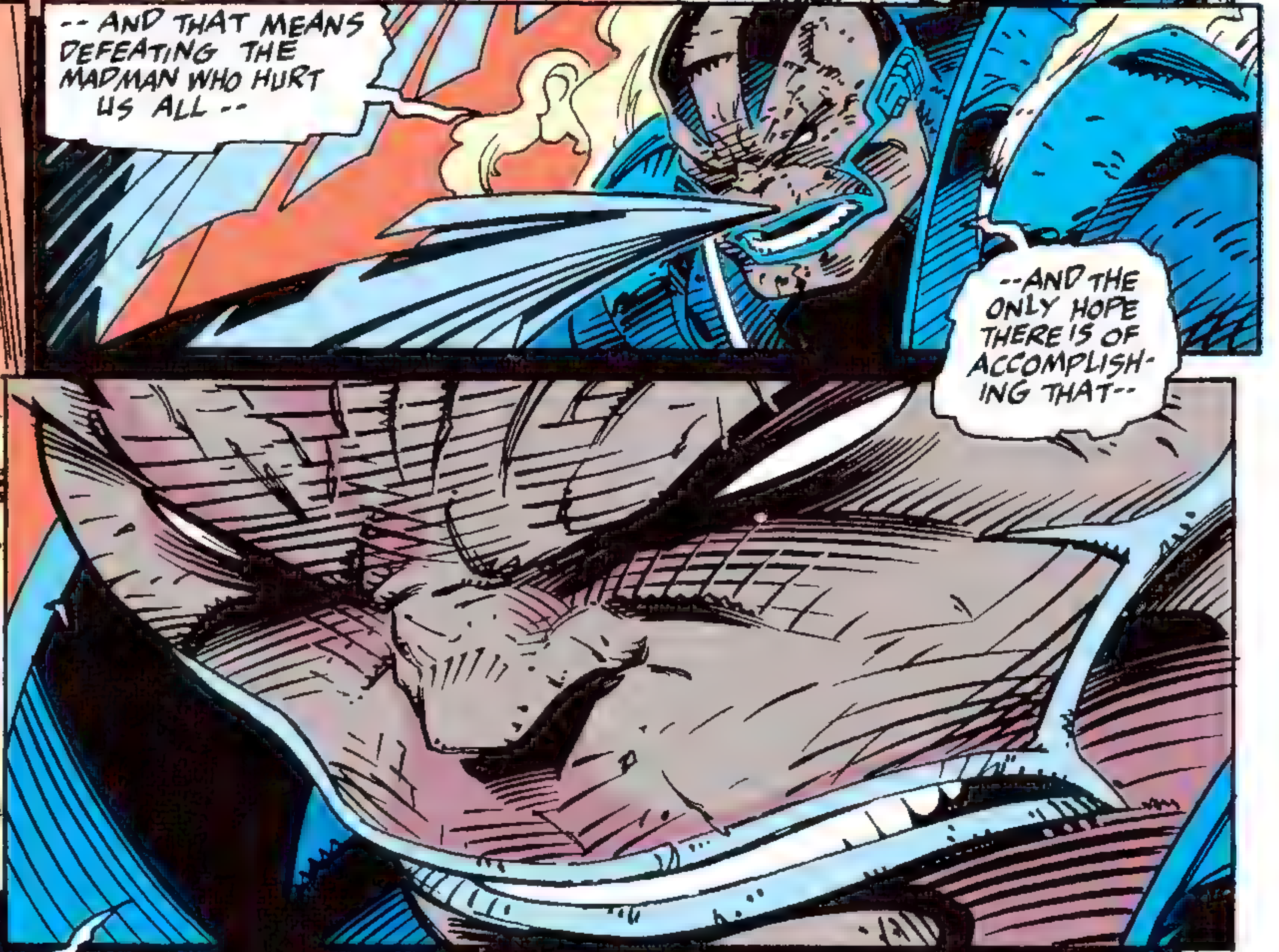
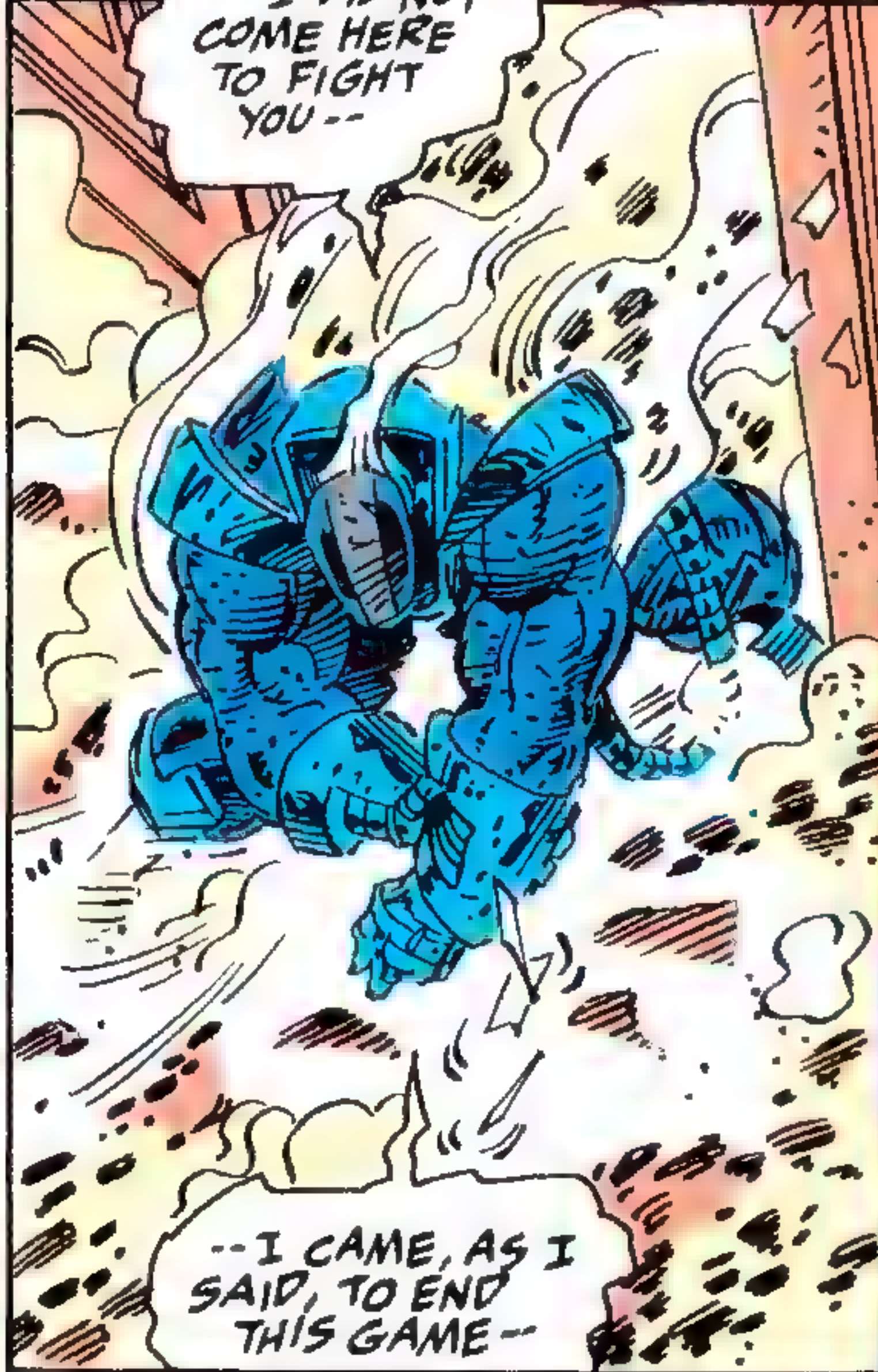
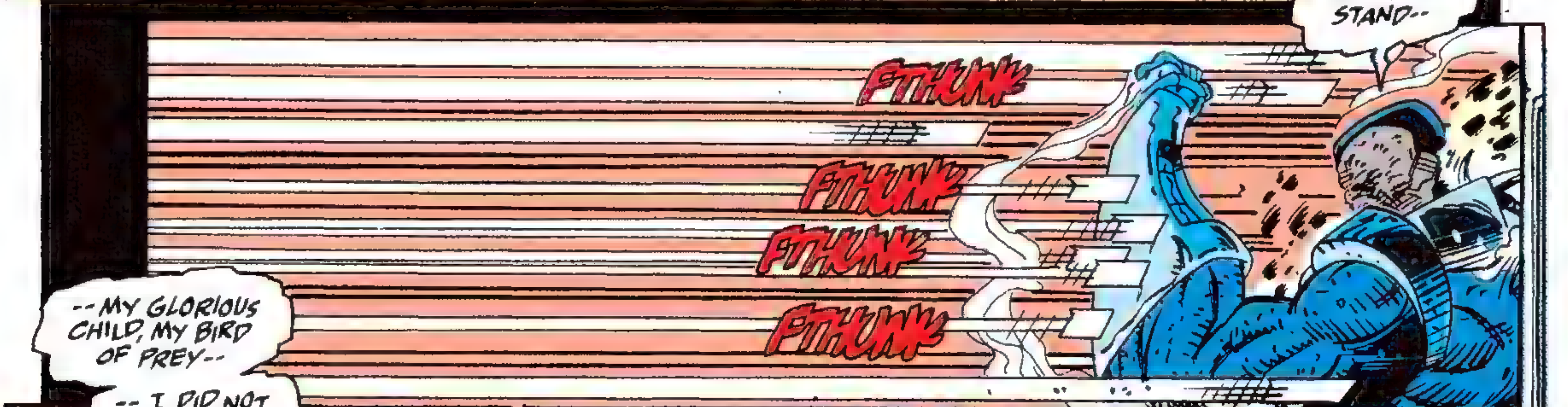
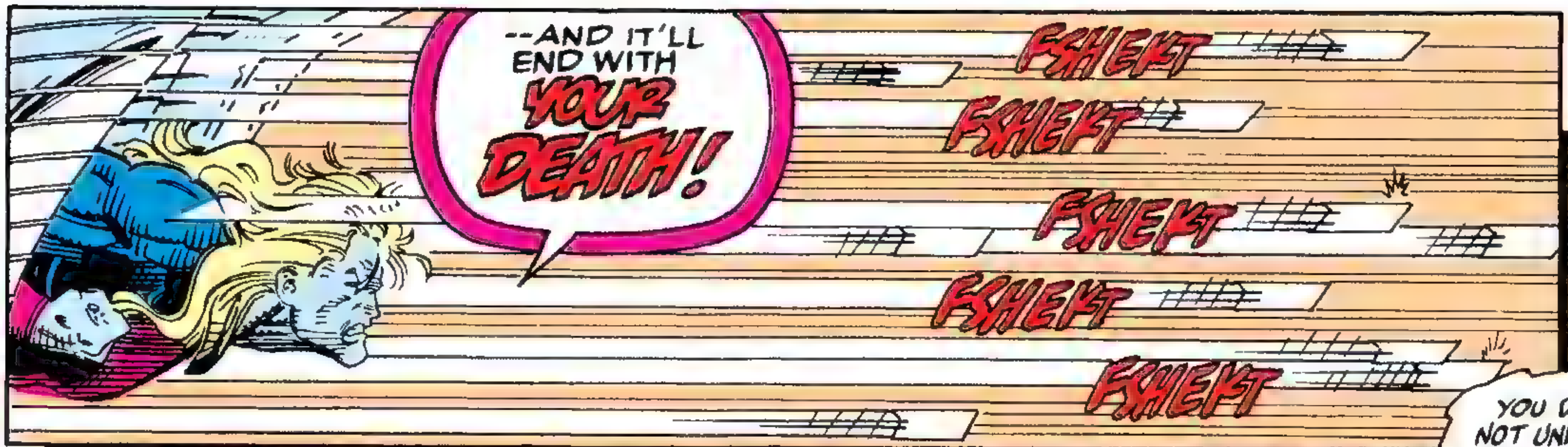
--IS NEITHER FOOL-- NOR AGGRESSOR--



YOU?!

BYE! BYE! BYE! BYE! BYE!





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CODE
AUTHORITY

X-CUTIONER'S SONG

PART 9

THE
UNCANNY





JEAN!

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO HER?!

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

IT WAS YOUR IDEA TO ATTEMPT AN ESCAPE, CYCLOPS. *

WE'RE ONLY HERE TO TAKE YOU BACK TO YOUR CELL--

--AND JEAN GREY, IT WOULD SEEM, DOWN TO THE MORGUE!

IF IT IS TRUE THAT A PICTURE PAINTS A THOUSAND WORDS...

... THEN THIS IS A PORTRAIT OF EXHAUSTION--

--HOPELESSNESS--

--AND FINALLY, DESPAIR.

STAN LEE PRESENTS THE UNCANNY X-MEN IN

PRELUDE

THE CHILDREN OF THE ATOM KNOW STRYFE IS BEHIND THE SHOOTING OF PROFESSOR X, THE FRAMING OF CABLE, THE DEFEAT OF APOCALYPSE, THE CAPTURE OF X-FORCE AND THE DISMANTLING OF THE M.L.F.!

LOBDELL / PETERSON / AUSTIN
ELIOPOULOS / ROSAS / JAVINS
HARRAS / DEFALCO

NOW THEY MUST FIND A WAY TO STOP HIM! CHAPTER 9 OF THE X-CUTIONER'S SONG.

* X-FACTOR #84--B.H.



SORRY, TUSK, WE WON'T BE ABLE TO JOIN YOU *OR* YOUR "EXTENSIONS."

JEAN AND I HAVE OTHER PLANS!

AS A TEENAGER, SCOTT SUMMERS LIVED IN MORTAL FEAR OF HIS MUTANT POWER.

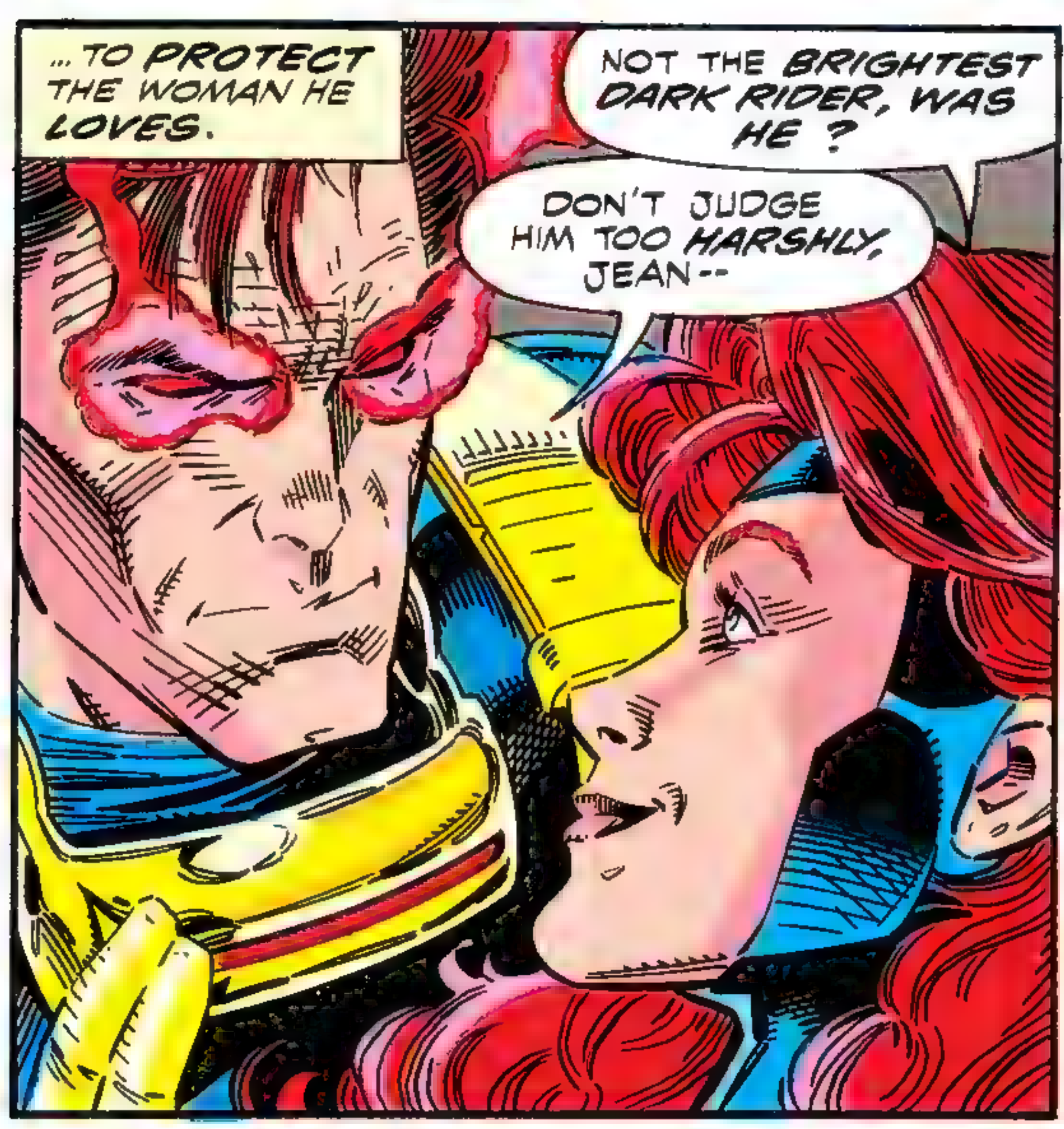
CURSED WITH UNCONTROLLABLE OPTIC BLASTS CAPABLE OF PULVERIZING ADAMANTIUM--

--HE VOWED NEVER TO USE THEM AGAINST ANOTHER LIVING BEING.

THAT WAS BEFORE THE X-MEN.

BEFORE HE BECAME THE LEADER OF A TEAM OF MUTANTS SWORN TO DEFEND A WORLD THAT FEARS AND HATES THEM.

BEFORE HE DISCOVERED JEAN GREY-- AND LEARNED THERE IS VERY LITTLE A MAN WON'T DO...



...TO PROTECT THE WOMAN HE LOVES.

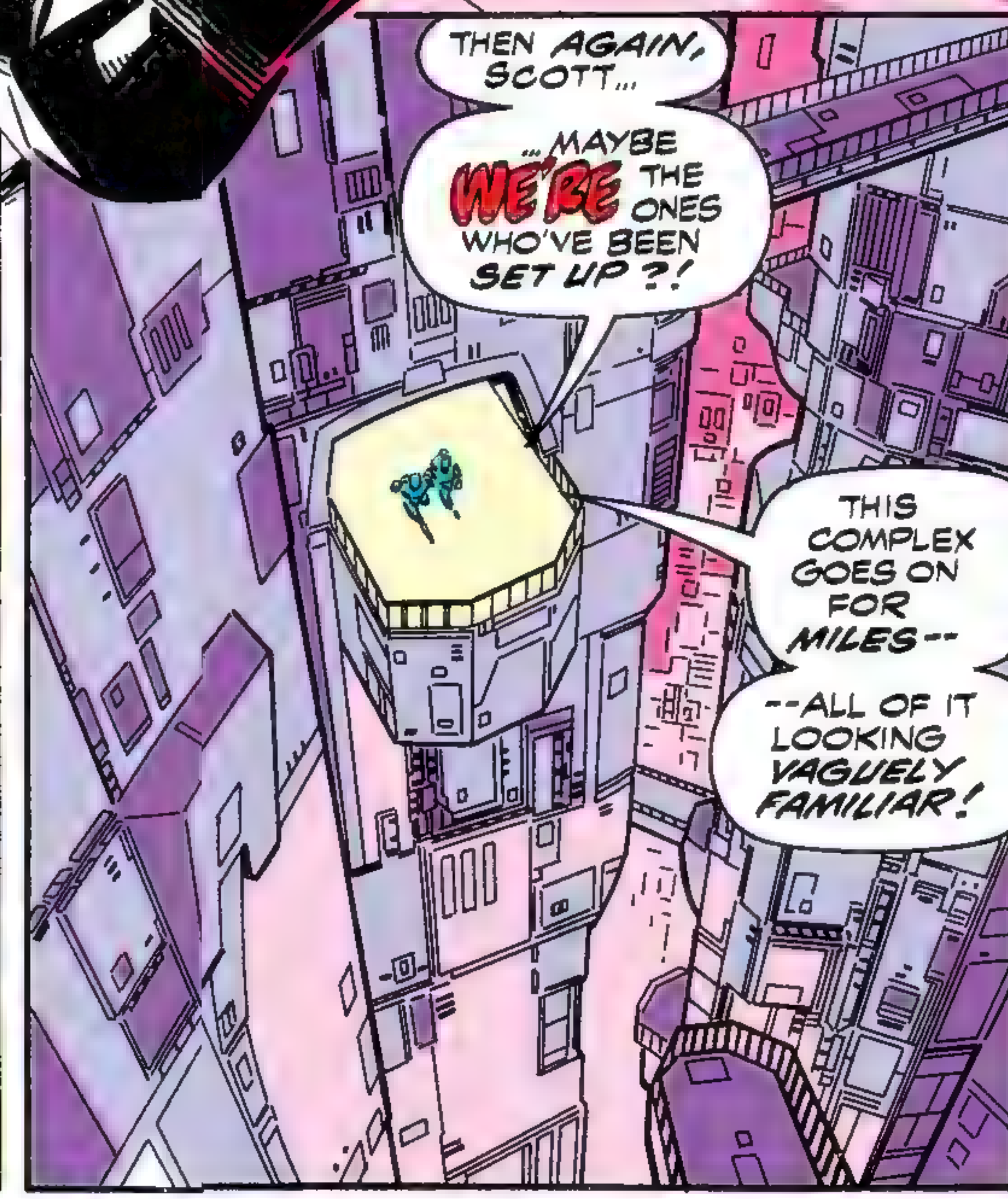
NOT THE BRIGHTEST DARK RIDER, WAS HE?

DON'T JUDGE HIM TOO HARSHLY, JEAN--



--HE COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN OUR PSYCHIC LINK ALLOWED YOU TO TELEKINETICALLY RESTRAIN MY OPTIC BLASTS.

JUST AS WELL, OR WE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SET HIM UP LIKE THAT.

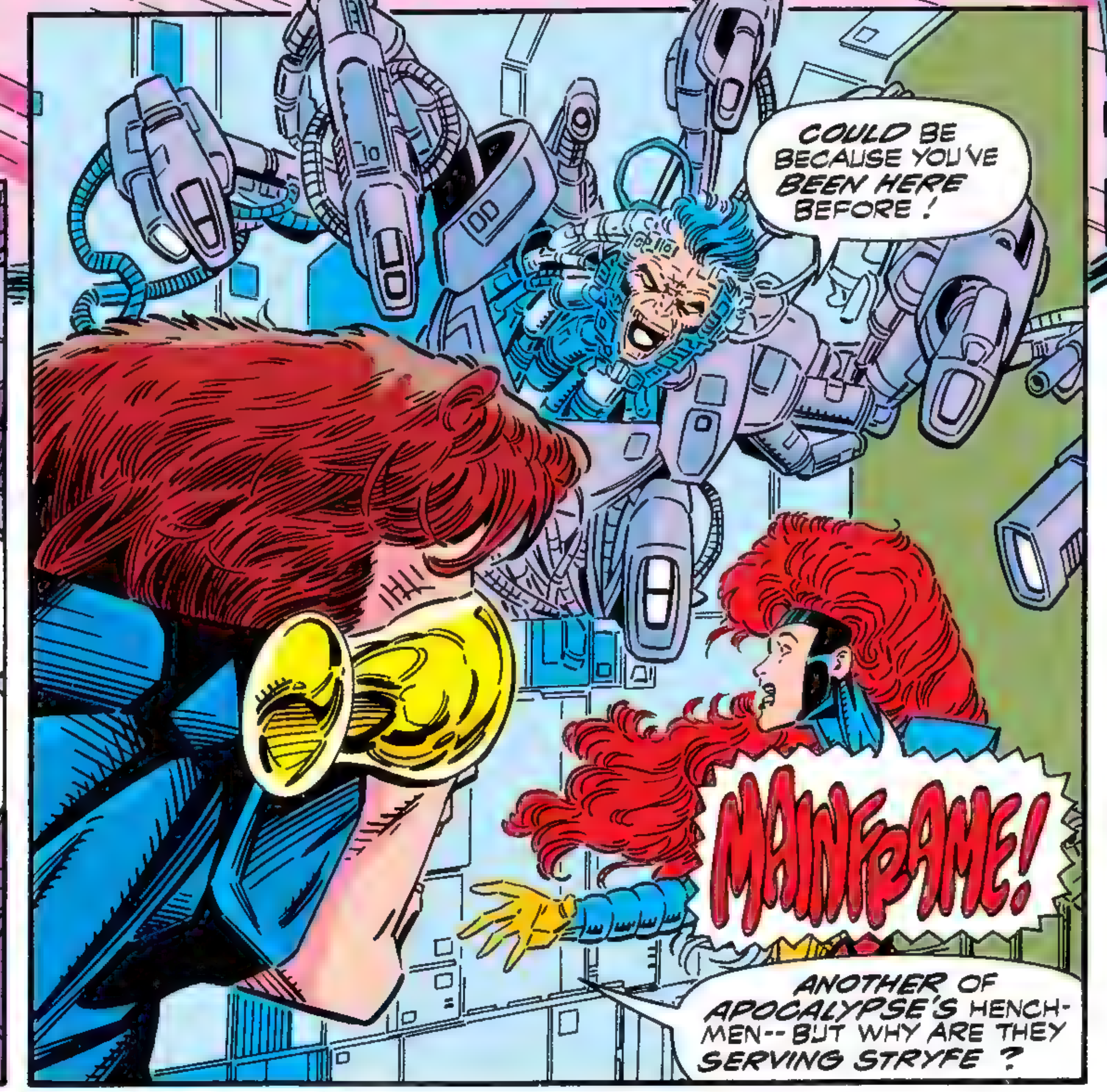


THEN AGAIN, SCOTT...

...MAYBE **WE'RE** THE ONES WHO'VE BEEN SET UP?!

THIS COMPLEX GOES ON FOR MILES--

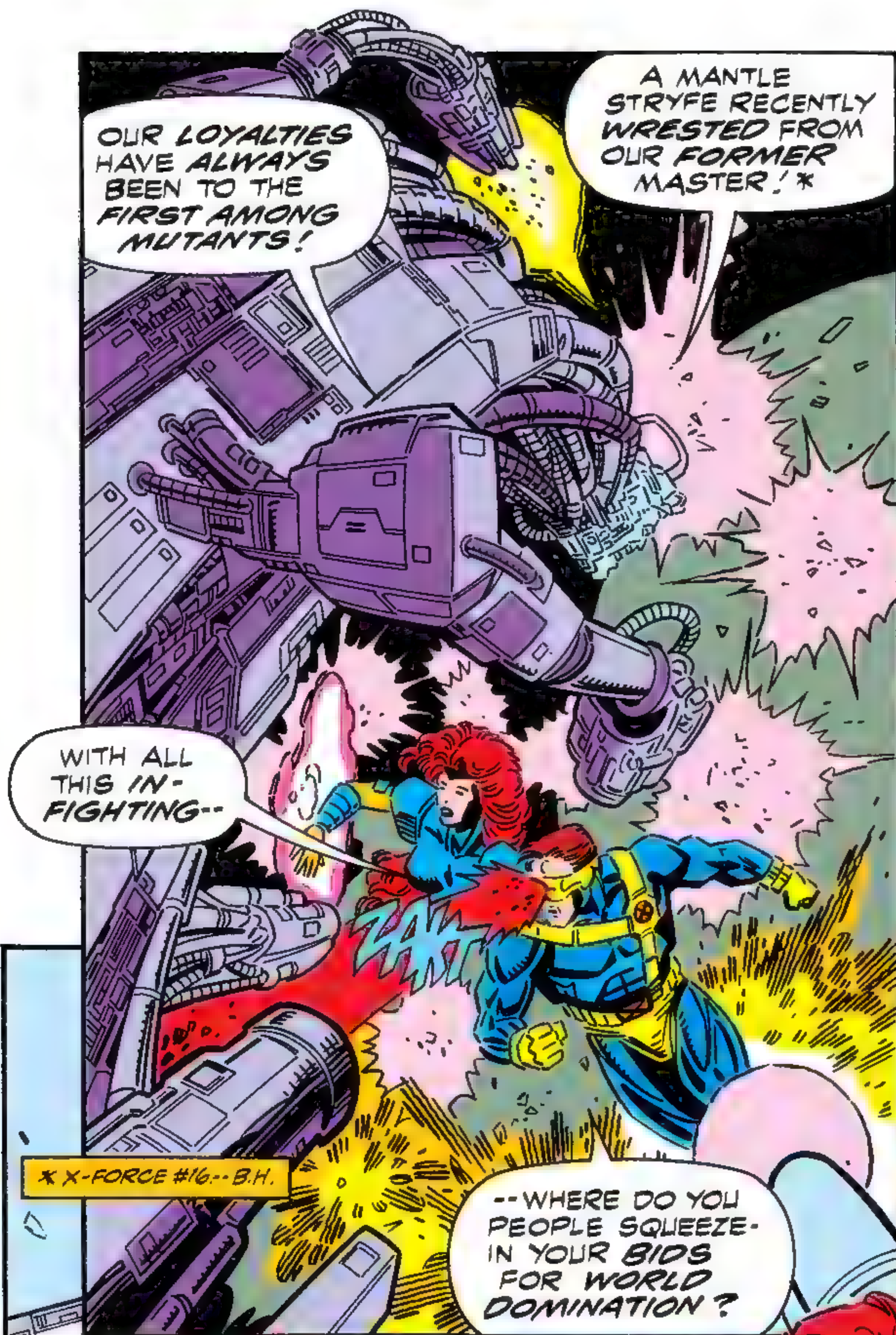
--ALL OF IT LOOKING VAGUELY FAMILIAR!



COULD BE BECAUSE YOU'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE!

MAINPANE!

ANOTHER OF APOCALYPSE'S HENCHMEN-- BUT WHY ARE THEY SERVING STRYFE?



OUR LOYALTIES
HAVE ALWAYS
BEEN TO THE
FIRST AMONG
MUTANTS!

A MANTLE
STRYFE RECENTLY
WRESTED FROM
OUR FORMER
MASTER! *

WITH ALL
THIS IN-
FIGHTING--

* X-FORCE #16--B.H.

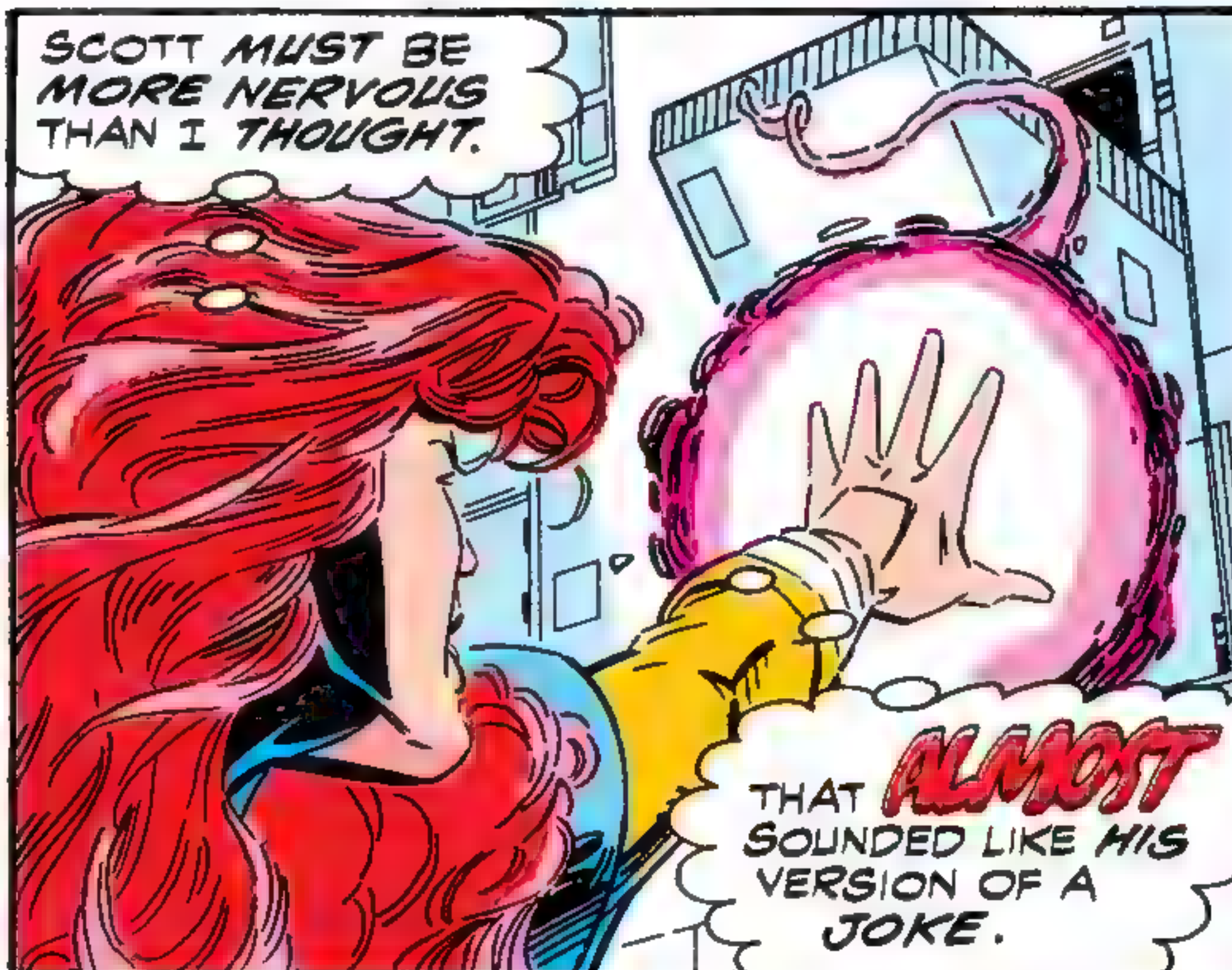
--WHERE DO YOU
PEOPLE SQUEEZE-
IN YOUR BIDS
FOR WORLD
DOMINATION?

NOW! I'M
READY!

BEFORE SHE'D
SACRIFICED HER
LIFE ON HIS
BEHALF--

--ONLY TO LEARN THERE
ARE GREATER POWERS
THAN DEATH IN THE
UNIVERSE...

... AND THE
GREATEST
OF THESE
IS LOVE.



SCOTT MUST BE
MORE NERVOUS
THAN I THOUGHT.

THAT **ALMOST**
SOUNDED LIKE HIS
VERSION OF A
JOKE.



THE T.K. LINE IS IN
PLACE, READY TO
COMPLETE OUR
GREAT ESCAPE?

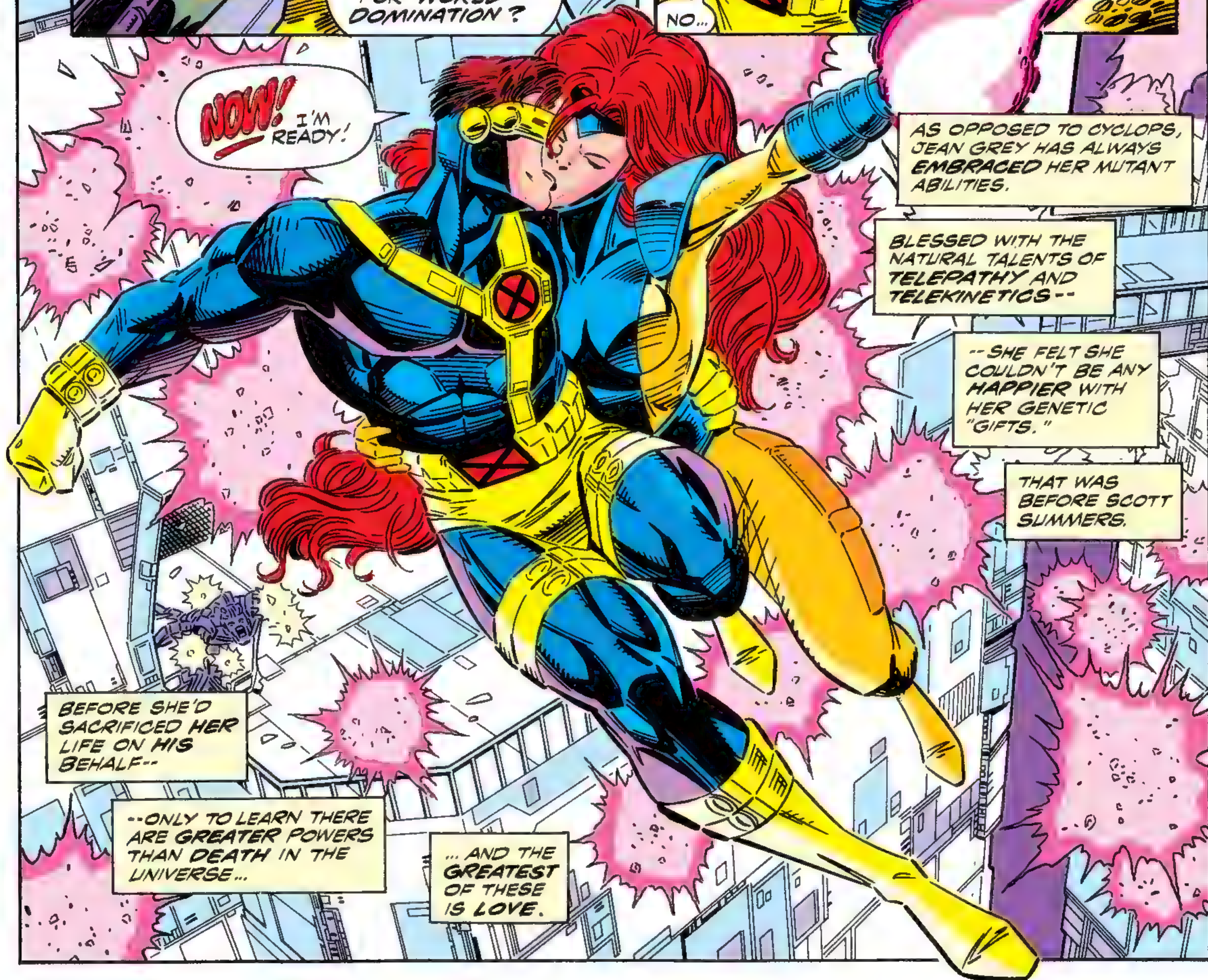
NO...

AS OPPOSED TO CYCLOPS,
JEAN GREY HAS ALWAYS
EMBRACED HER MUTANT
ABILITIES.

BLESSED WITH THE
NATURAL TALENTS OF
TELEPATHY AND
TELEKINETICS--

-- SHE FELT SHE
COULDN'T BE ANY
HAPPIER WITH
HER GENETIC
"GIFTS."

THAT WAS
BEFORE SCOTT
SUMMERS.



SURPRISED,
ZERO?

YOU
SHOULDN'T
BE.

DID YOU
BELIEVE
THEY WOULD
HAVE
ESCAPED--
IF I HAD NOT
ALLOWED?

SUMMERS AND
GREY ARE NOTHING
IF NOT PREDICTABLE.

AND IN
THE END--

-- THAT
PREDICTABILITY
WILL DESTROY
THEM.

AS
SURELY...

... AS IT
DESTROYED
ME.

BUT STRYFE
RECEIVES NO
ANSWER FROM
HIS SILENT
SOLDIER--

-- THE ONLY MEMBER
OF THE MUTANT
LIBERATION FRONT
TO ESCAPE JUSTICE
AT THE HANDS OF
XAVIER'S STUDENTS.*

* X-MEN #15. -- BODY-
COUNTIN' BOB



SALEM
CENTER.

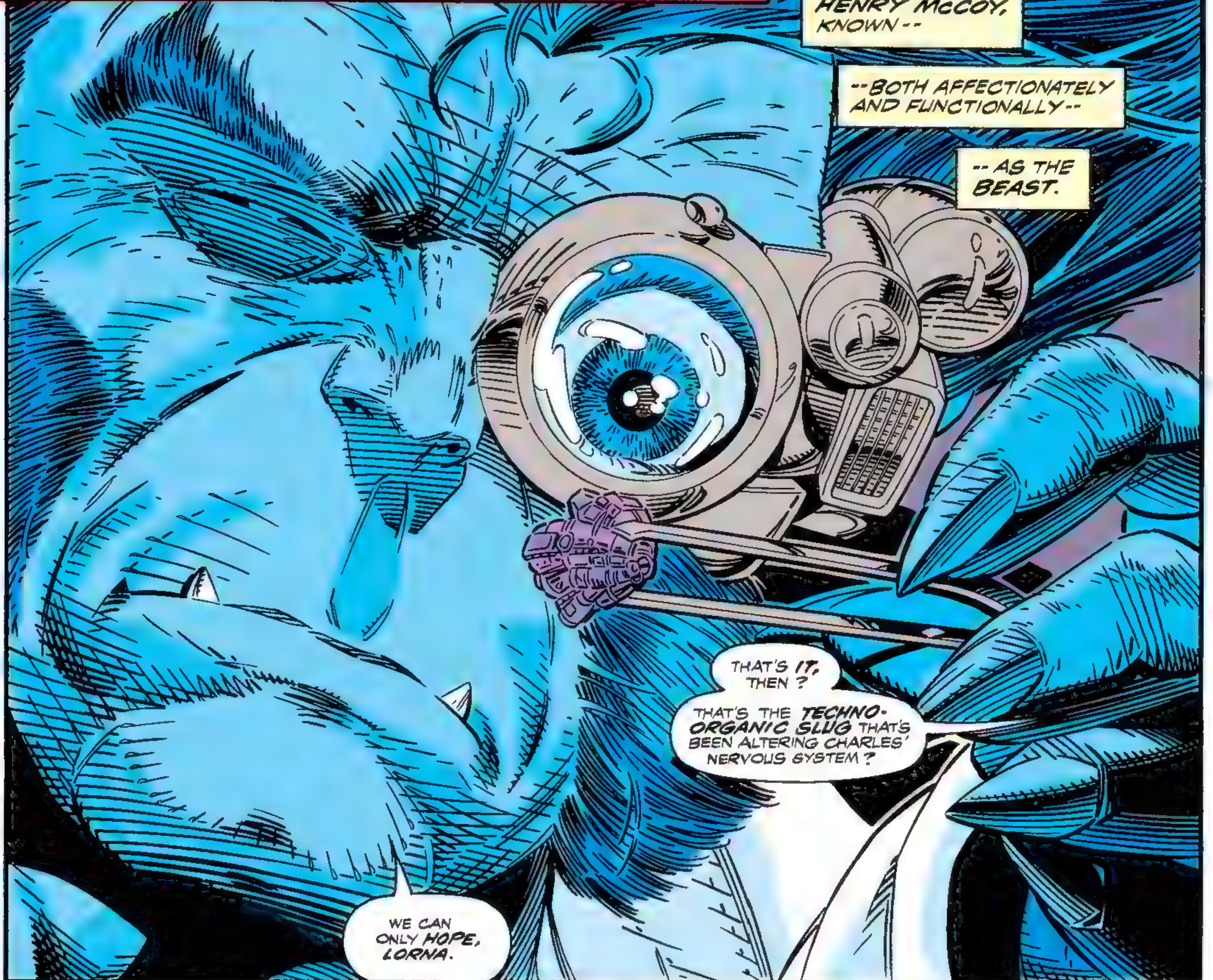
PROFESSOR XAVIER'S
SCHOOL FOR GIFTED
YOUNGSTERS.

HOME OF
THE X-MEN.

THIS ONE IS DR.
HENRY MCCOY,
KNOWN --

-- BOTH AFFECTIONATELY
AND FUNCTIONALLY --

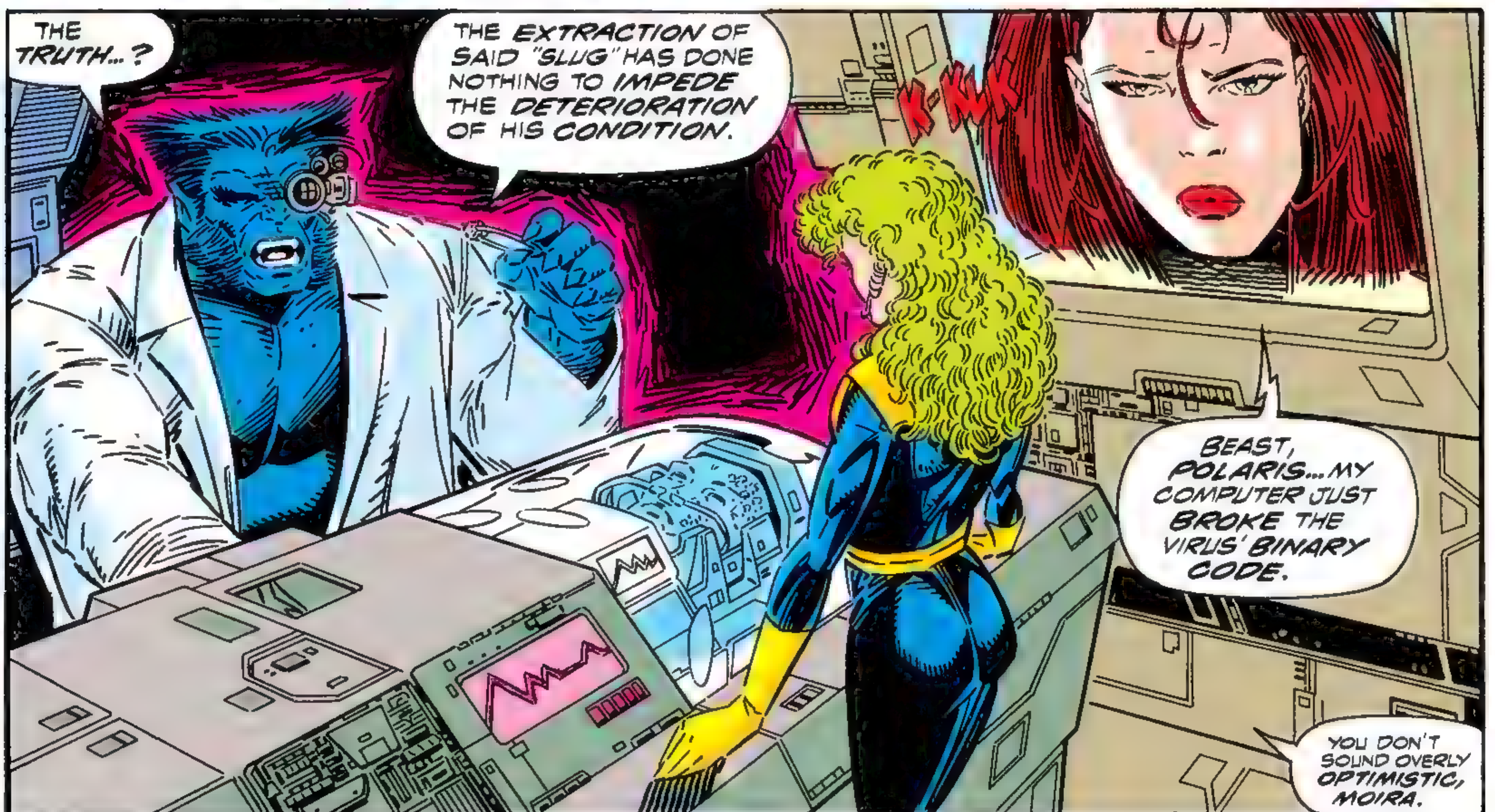
-- AS THE
BEAST.



THAT'S IT,
THEN?

THAT'S THE **TECHNO-
ORGANIC SLUG** THAT'S
BEEN ALTERING CHARLES'
NERVOUS SYSTEM?

WE CAN
ONLY HOPE,
LORNA.

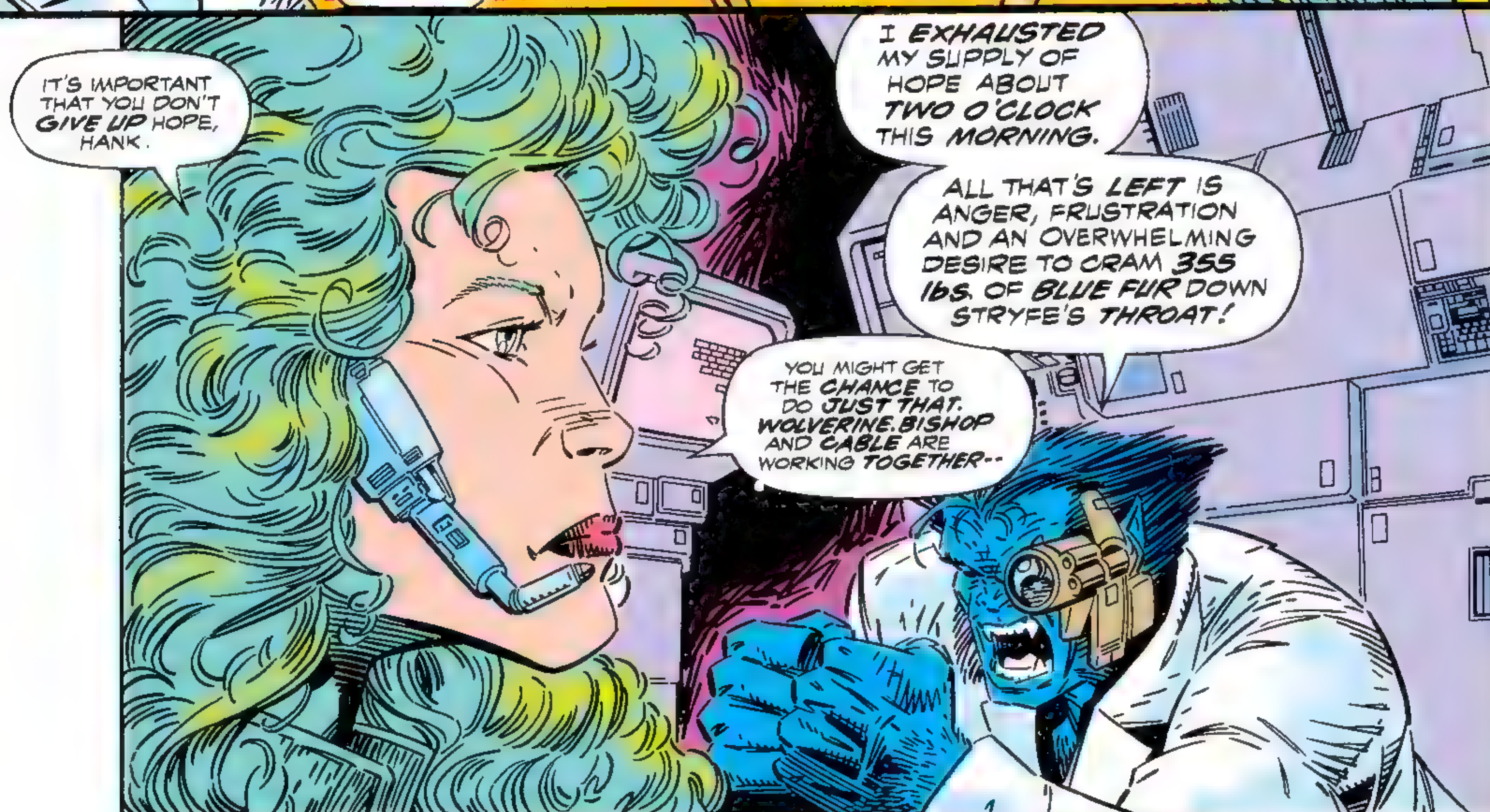
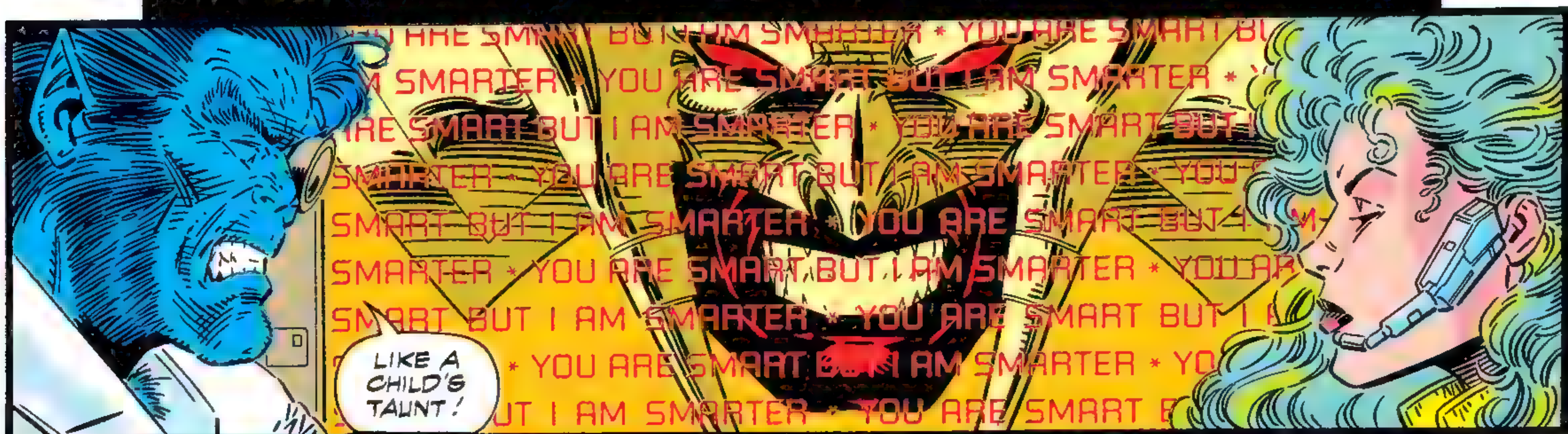
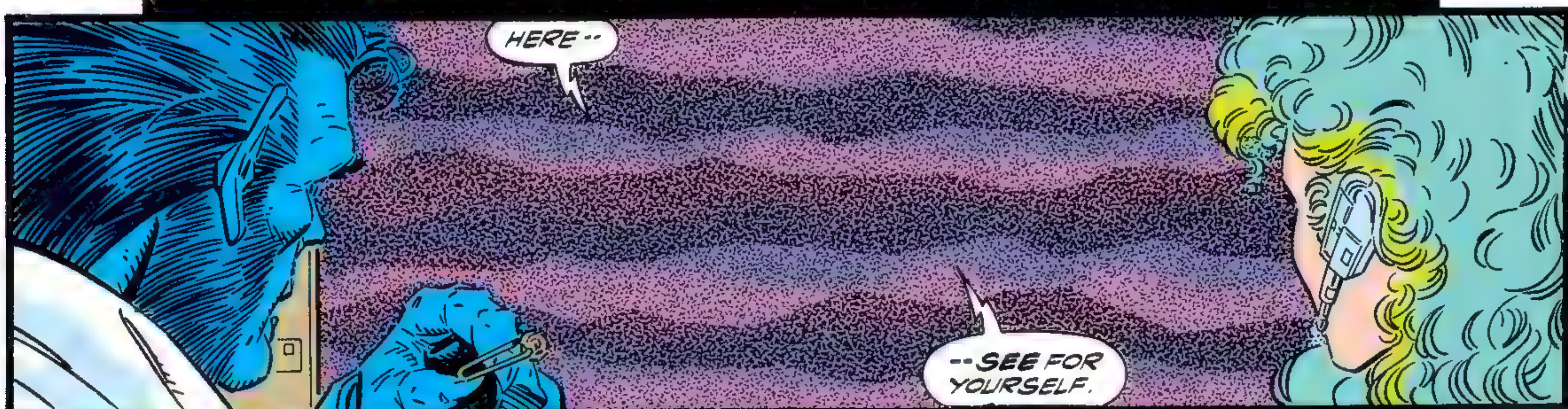
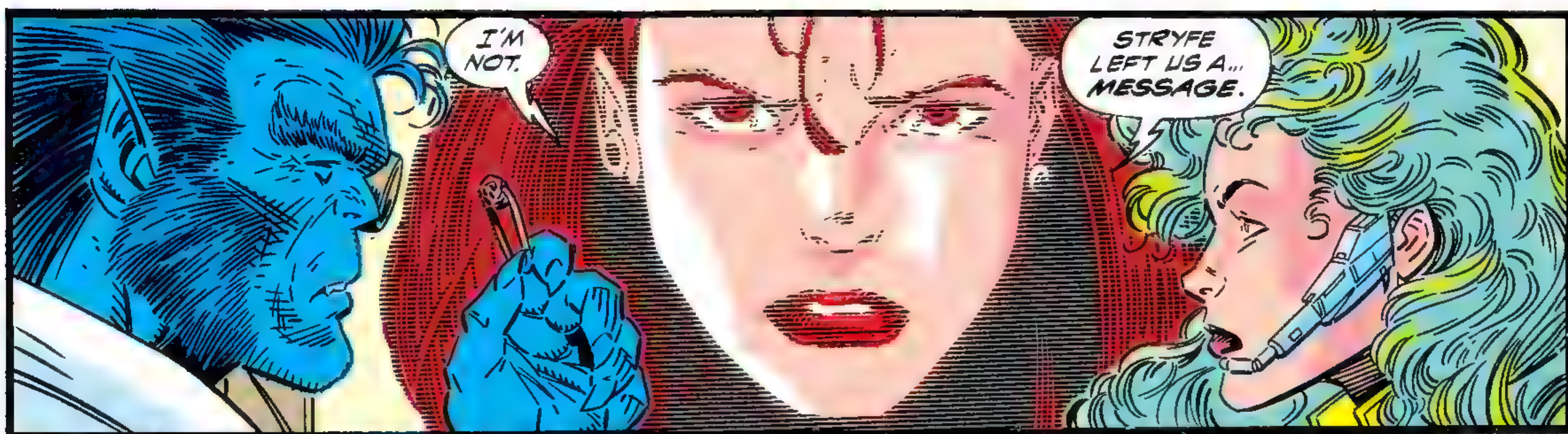


THE
TRUTH...?

THE EXTRACTION OF
SAID "SLUG" HAS DONE
NOTHING TO IMPEDE
THE DETERIORATION
OF HIS CONDITION.

BEAST,
POLARIS... MY
COMPUTER JUST
BROKE THE
VIRUS' BINARY
CODE.

YOU DON'T
SOUND OVERLY
OPTIMISTIC,
MOIRA.





"... THE *THREE* OF THEM HAVE *PROBABLY* KILLED EACH OTHER BY NOW."

ANYONE FOR A CUP OF COFFEE, WOLVERINE?

BISHOP?

ANYONE?

I have no need of liquid refreshments, Nathan.

Thank you, anyway.

I WAS SPEAKING TO OUR GUESTS, PROFESSOR.

They do not seem eager to engage in conversation.

Perhaps they are uncomfortable aboard Graymalkin?

Space travel — even our tight orbit around the Earth — is an acquired taste.

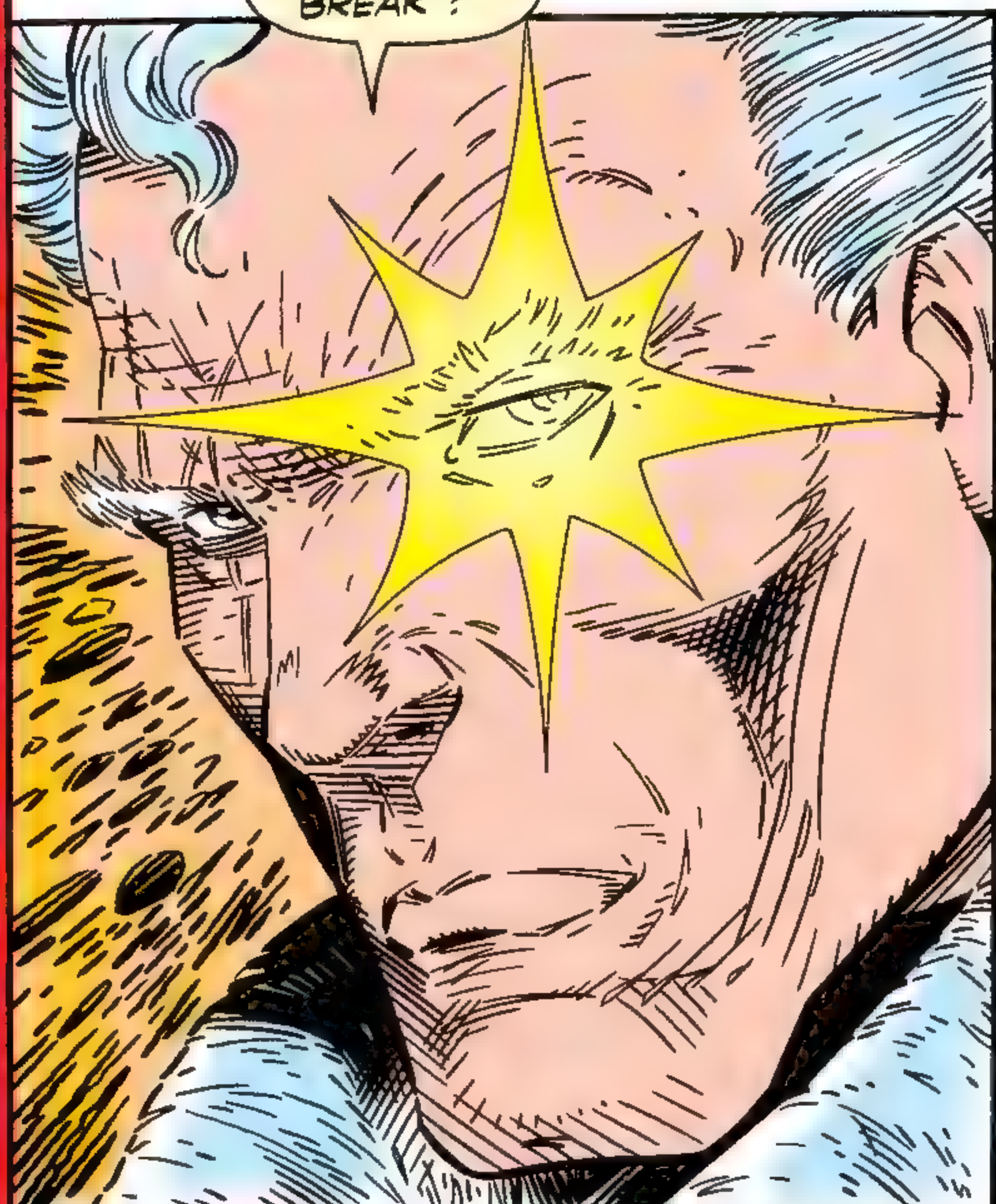
OR MAYBE THEY'RE JUST *CONCENTRATING* ON THE TASK AT HAND--
LOCATING STRYFE?

GENTLEMEN, I APPRECIATE THE IMPORTANCE OF A *STRATEGY SESSION* AS MUCH AS THE NEXT SEASONED *WARHORSE*...

... BUT RUNNING THROUGH THIS SCENARIO AD INFINITUM IS GETTING US NOWHERE.

YOU'VE BEEN AT THAT FOR HOURS, SON.

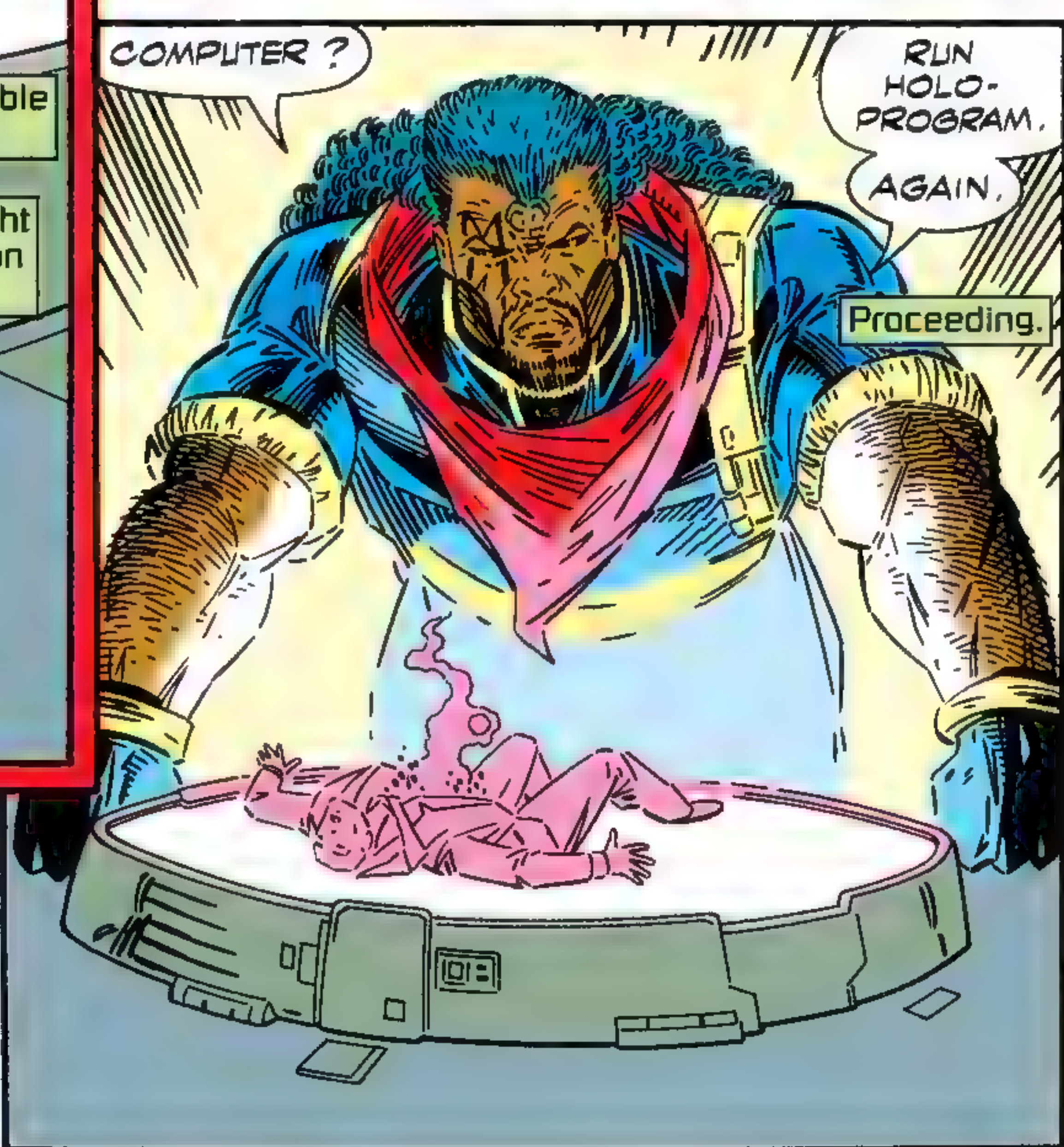
WHY DON'T YOU TAKE A BREAK?

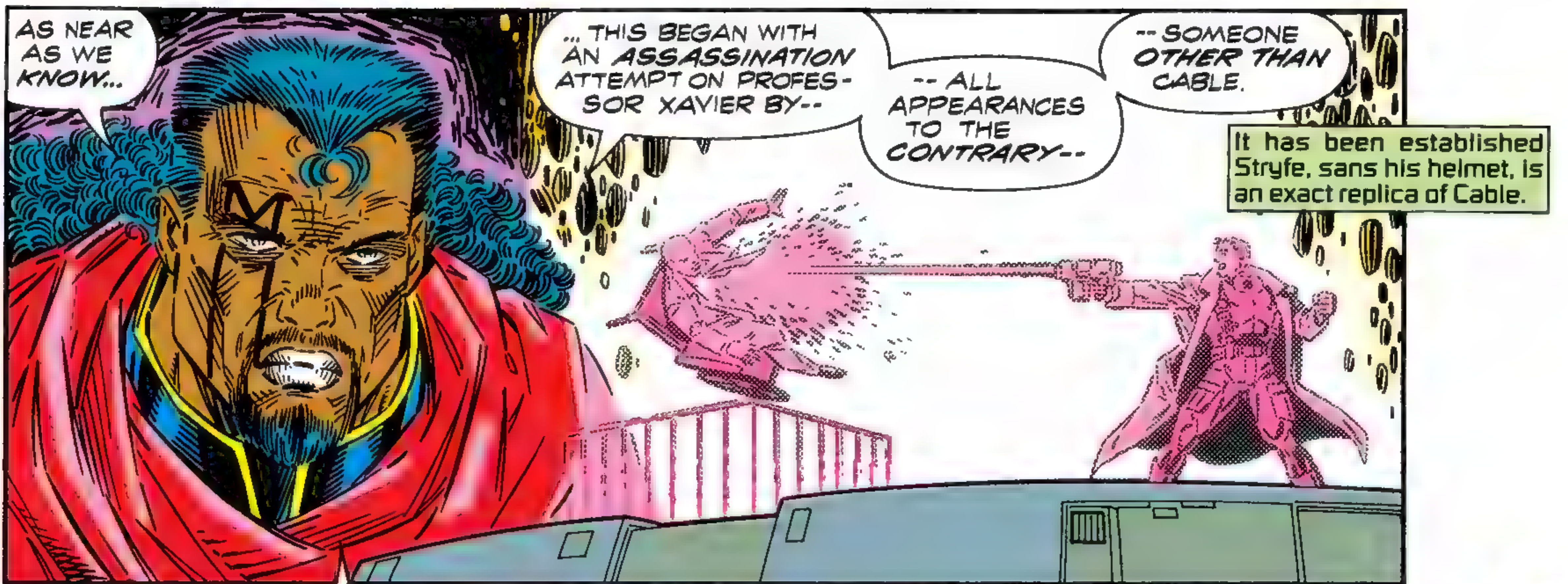


COMPUTER?

RUN HOLO-PROGRAM. AGAIN.

Proceeding.





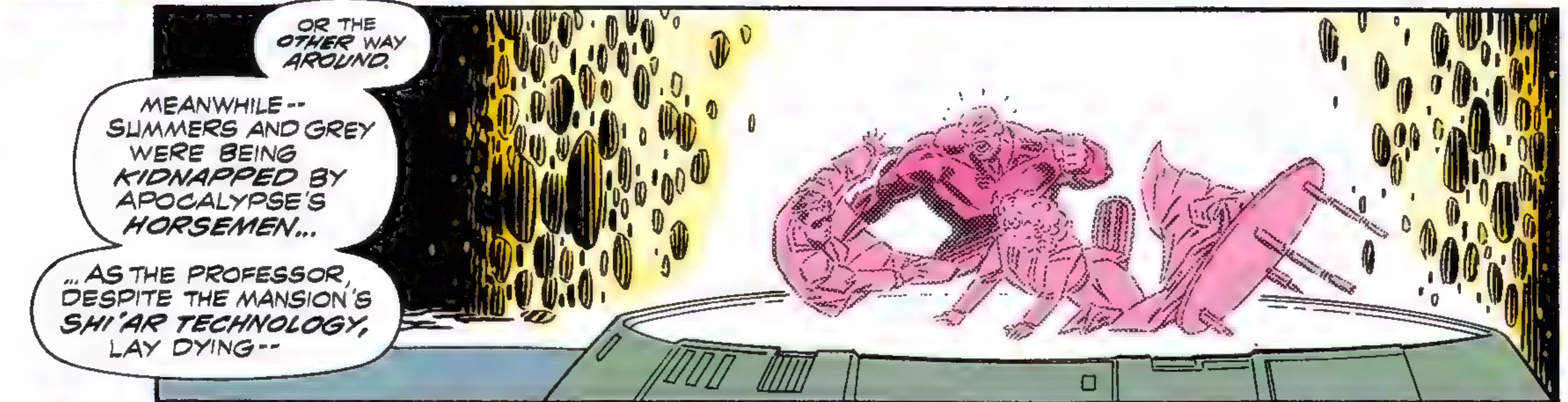
AS NEAR AS WE KNOW...

... THIS BEGAN WITH AN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON PROFESSOR XAVIER BY--

-- ALL APPEARANCES TO THE CONTRARY--

-- SOMEONE OTHER THAN CABLE.

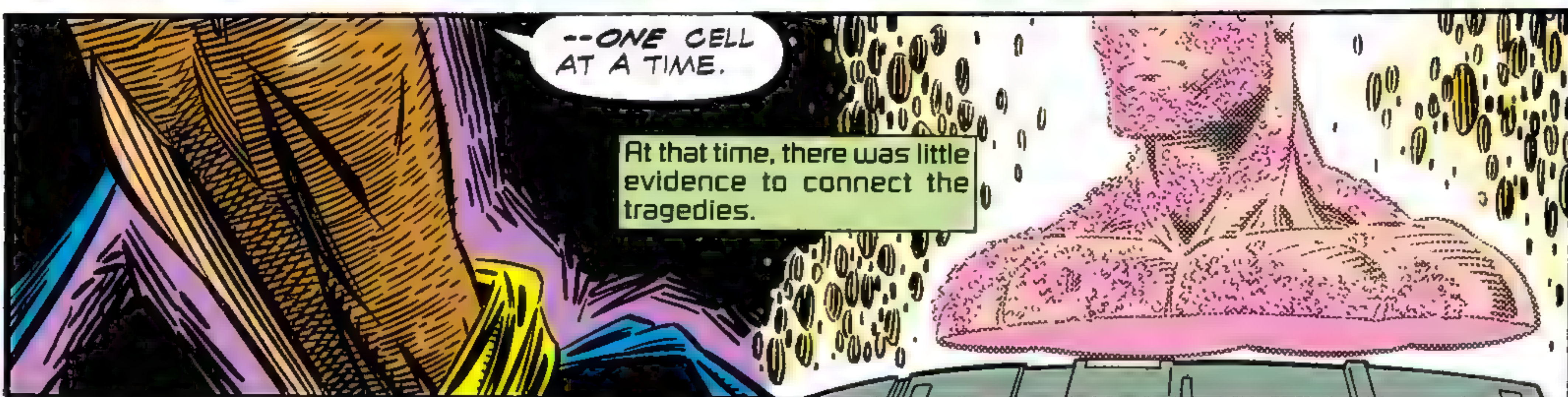
It has been established Stryfe, sans his helmet, is an exact replica of Cable.



OR THE OTHER WAY AROUND.

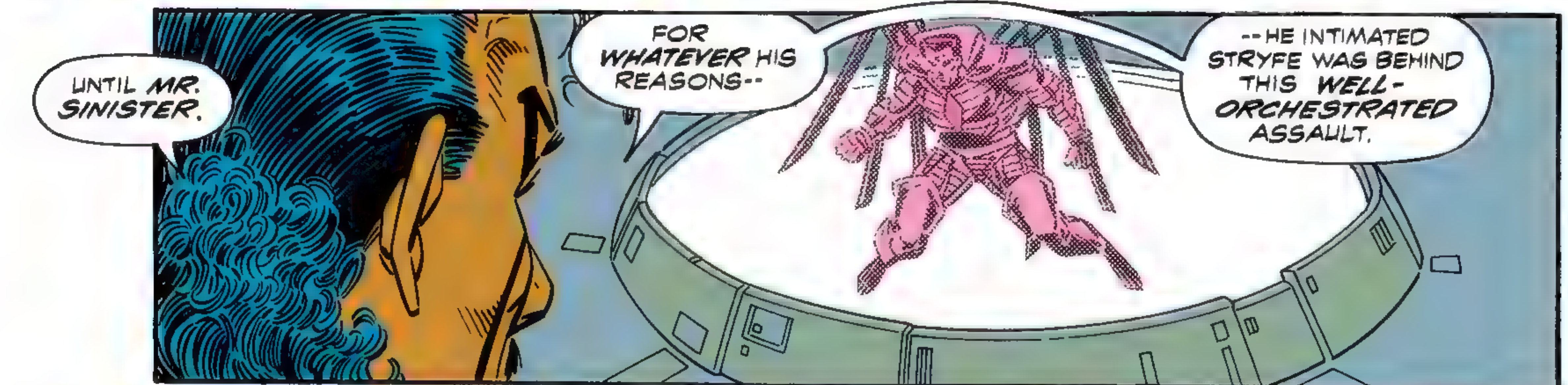
MEANWHILE-- SLIMMERS AND GREY WERE BEING KIDNAPPED BY APOCALYPSE'S HORSEMEN...

... AS THE PROFESSOR, DESPITE THE MANSION'S SHI'AR TECHNOLOGY, LAY DYING--



-- ONE CELL AT A TIME.

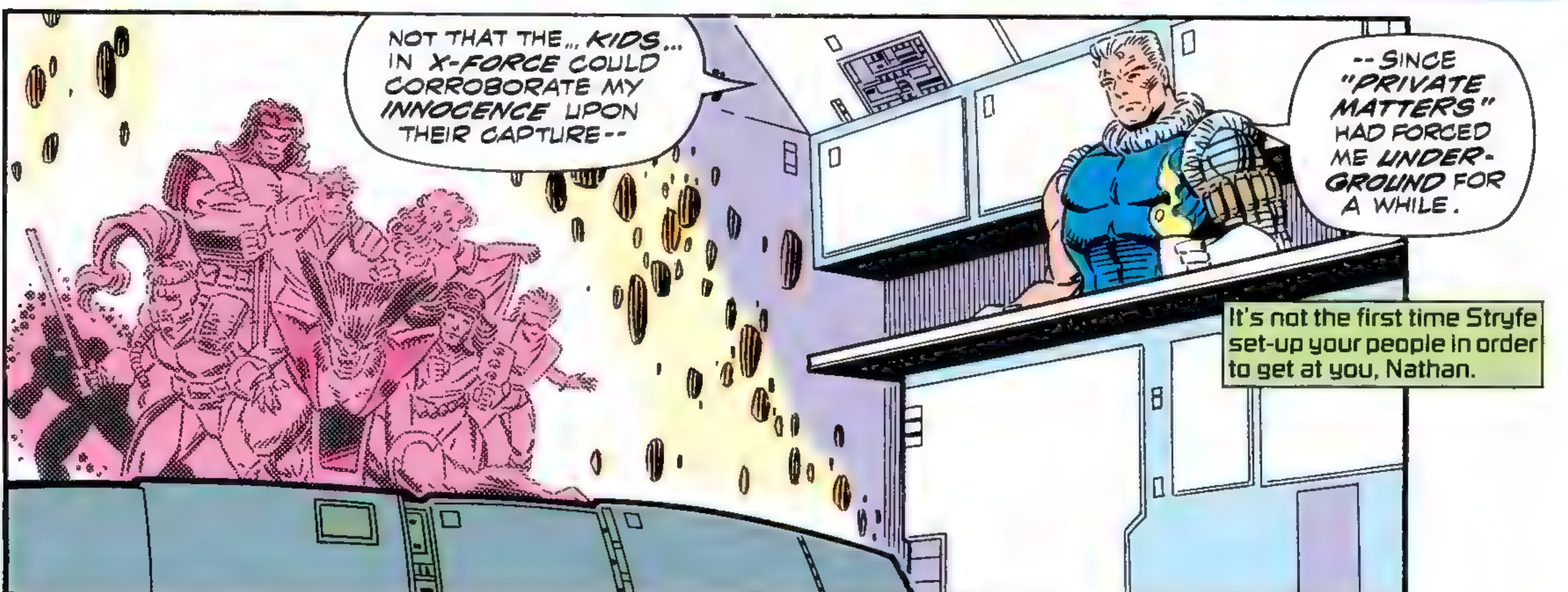
At that time, there was little evidence to connect the tragedies.



UNTIL MR. SINISTER.

FOR WHATEVER HIS REASONS--

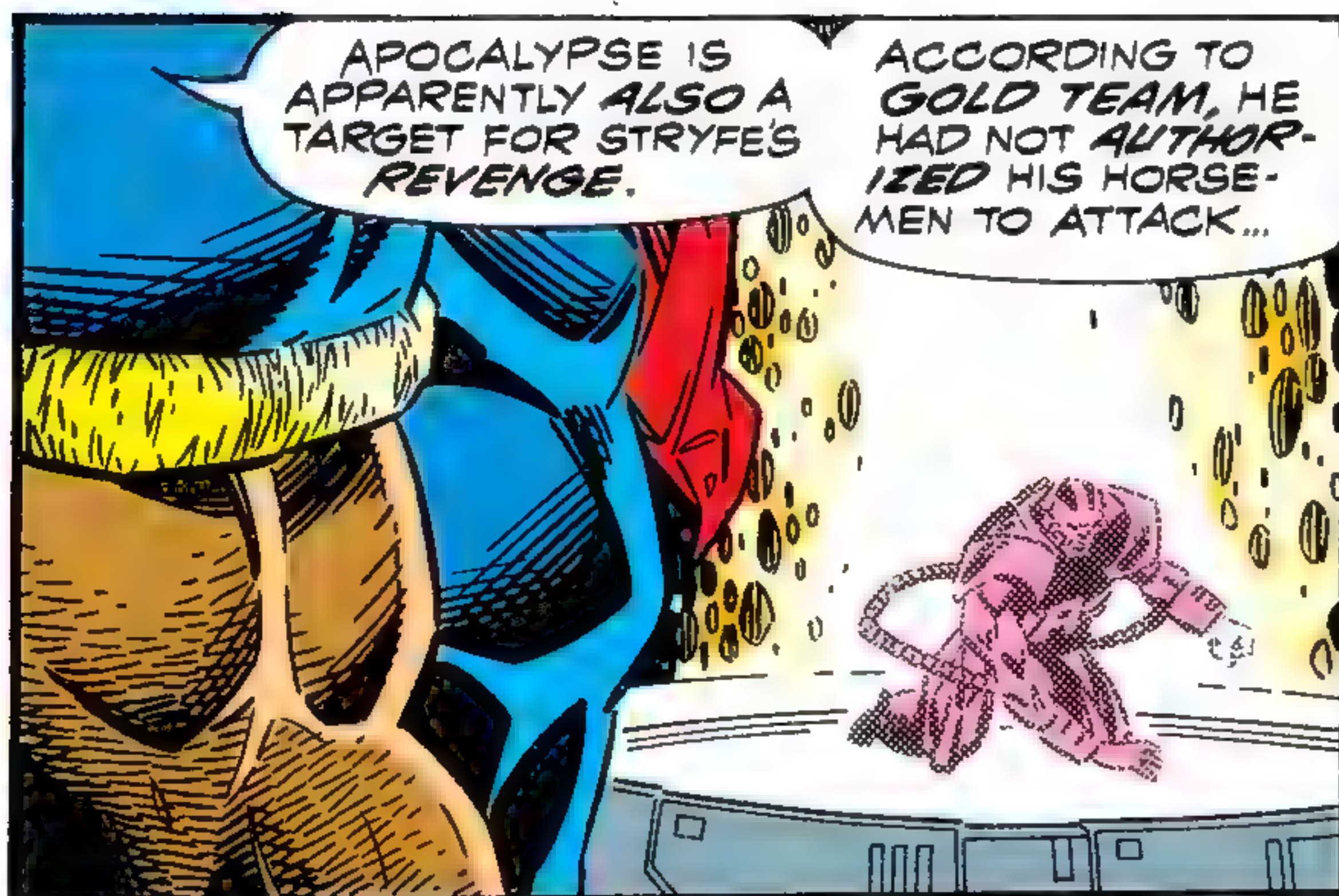
-- HE INTIMATED STRYFE WAS BEHIND THIS WELL-ORCHESTRATED ASSAULT.



NOT THAT THE ... KIDS ... IN X-FORCE COULD CORROBORATE MY INNOGENCE UPON THEIR CAPTURE--

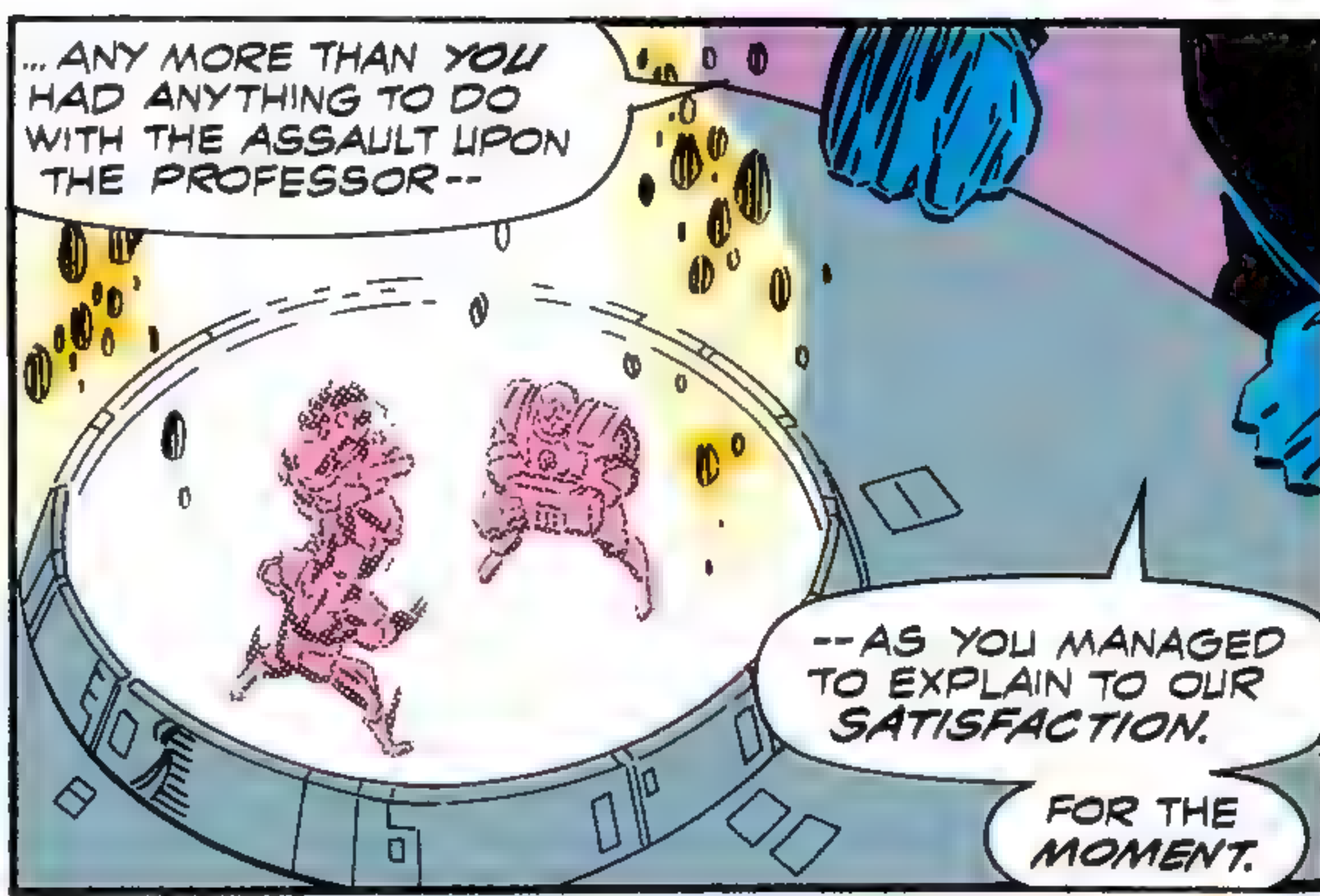
-- SINCE "PRIVATE MATTERS" HAD FORCED ME UNDERGROUND FOR A WHILE.

It's not the first time Stryfe set-up your people in order to get at you, Nathan.



APOCALYPSE IS APPARENTLY ALSO A TARGET FOR STRYFE'S REVENGE.

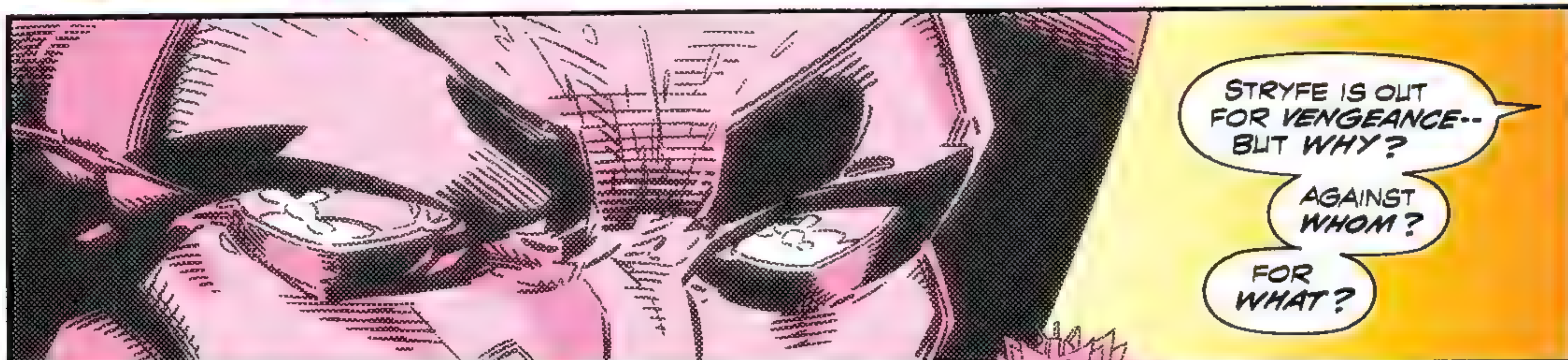
ACCORDING TO GOLD TEAM, HE HAD NOT AUTHORIZED HIS HORSEMEN TO ATTACK...



... ANY MORE THAN YOU HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE ASSAULT UPON THE PROFESSOR--

--AS YOU MANAGED TO EXPLAIN TO OUR SATISFACTION.

FOR THE MOMENT.



STRYFE IS OUT FOR VENGEANCE-- BUT WHY?

AGAINST WHOM?

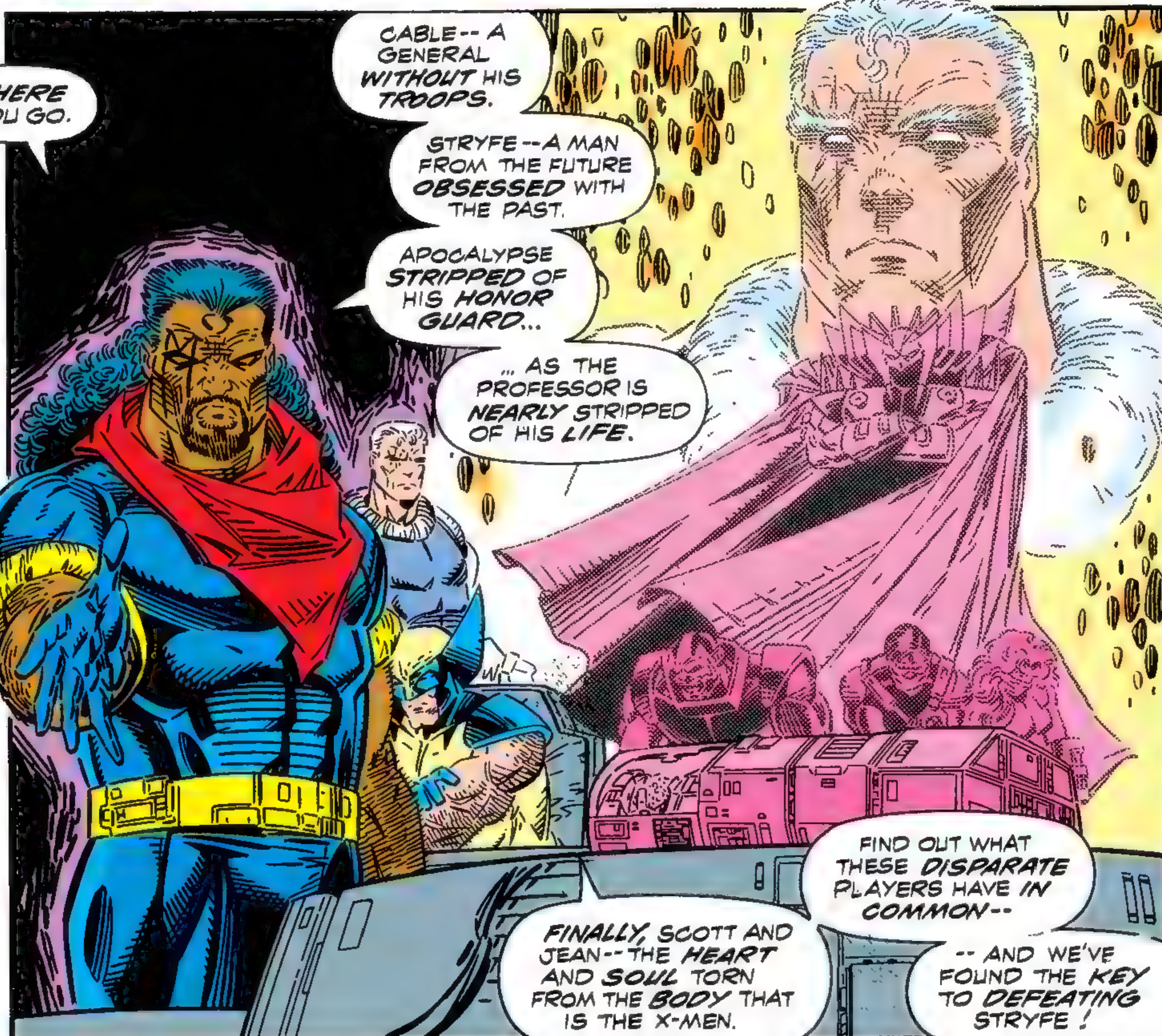
FOR WHAT?



PERHAPS.

Perhaps a display of the key elements to date?

BUT YOU'RE MISSING ONE.



THERE YOU GO.

CABLE-- A GENERAL WITHOUT HIS TROOPS.

STRYFE--A MAN FROM THE FUTURE OBSESSED WITH THE PAST.

APOCALYPSE STRIPPED OF HIS HONOR GUARD...

... AS THE PROFESSOR IS NEARLY STRIPPED OF HIS LIFE.

FIND OUT WHAT THESE DISPARATE PLAYERS HAVE IN COMMON--

FINALLY, SCOTT AND JEAN-- THE HEART AND SOUL TORN FROM THE BODY THAT IS THE X-MEN.

-- AND WE'VE FOUND THE KEY TO DEFEATING STRYFE!

SCOTT, MAYBE NOW
ISN'T THE TIME TO
QUESTION THE MOTIVES
OF OUR CAPTOR--

-- BUT I
CAN'T HELP
WONDERING...

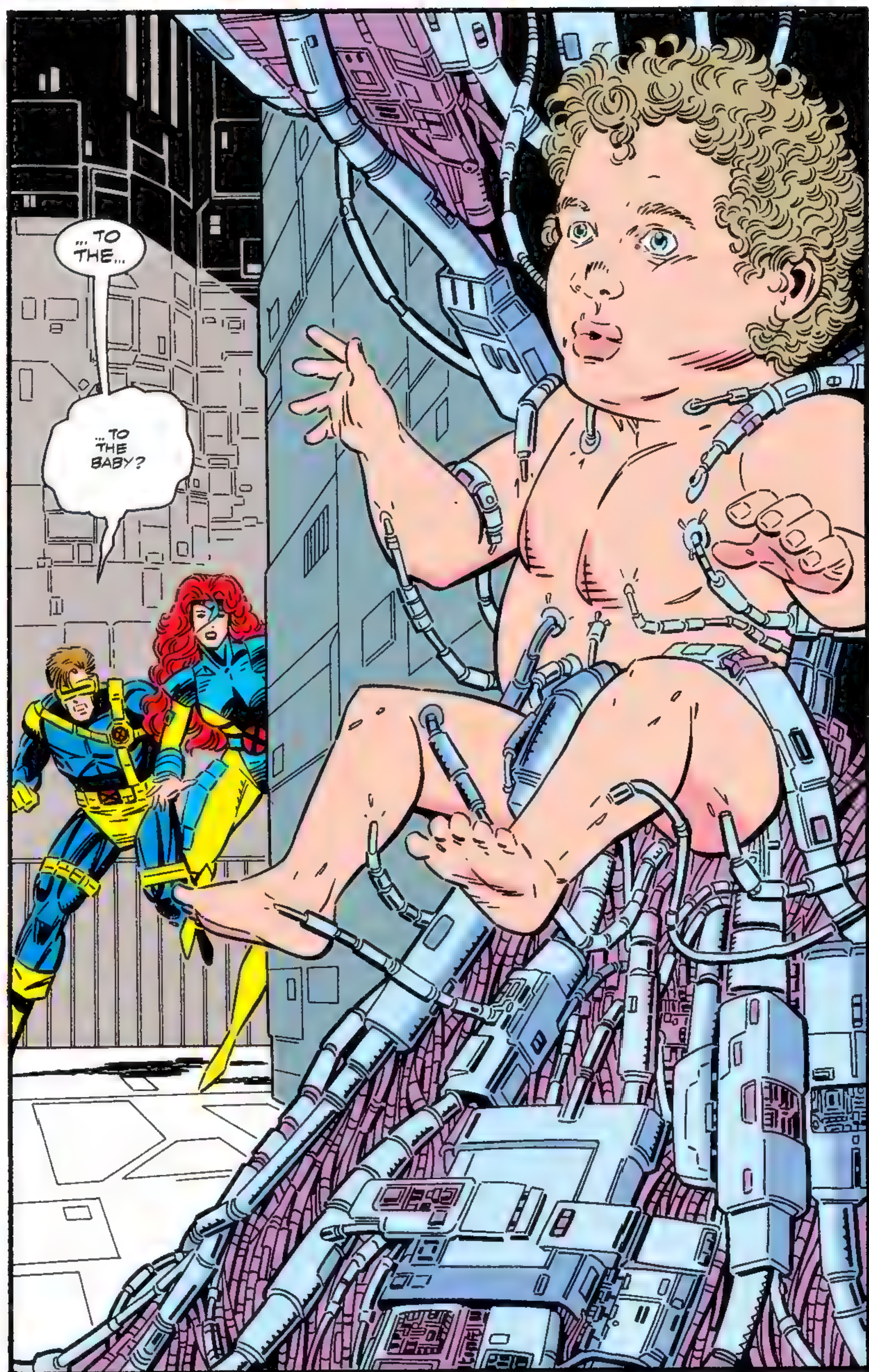
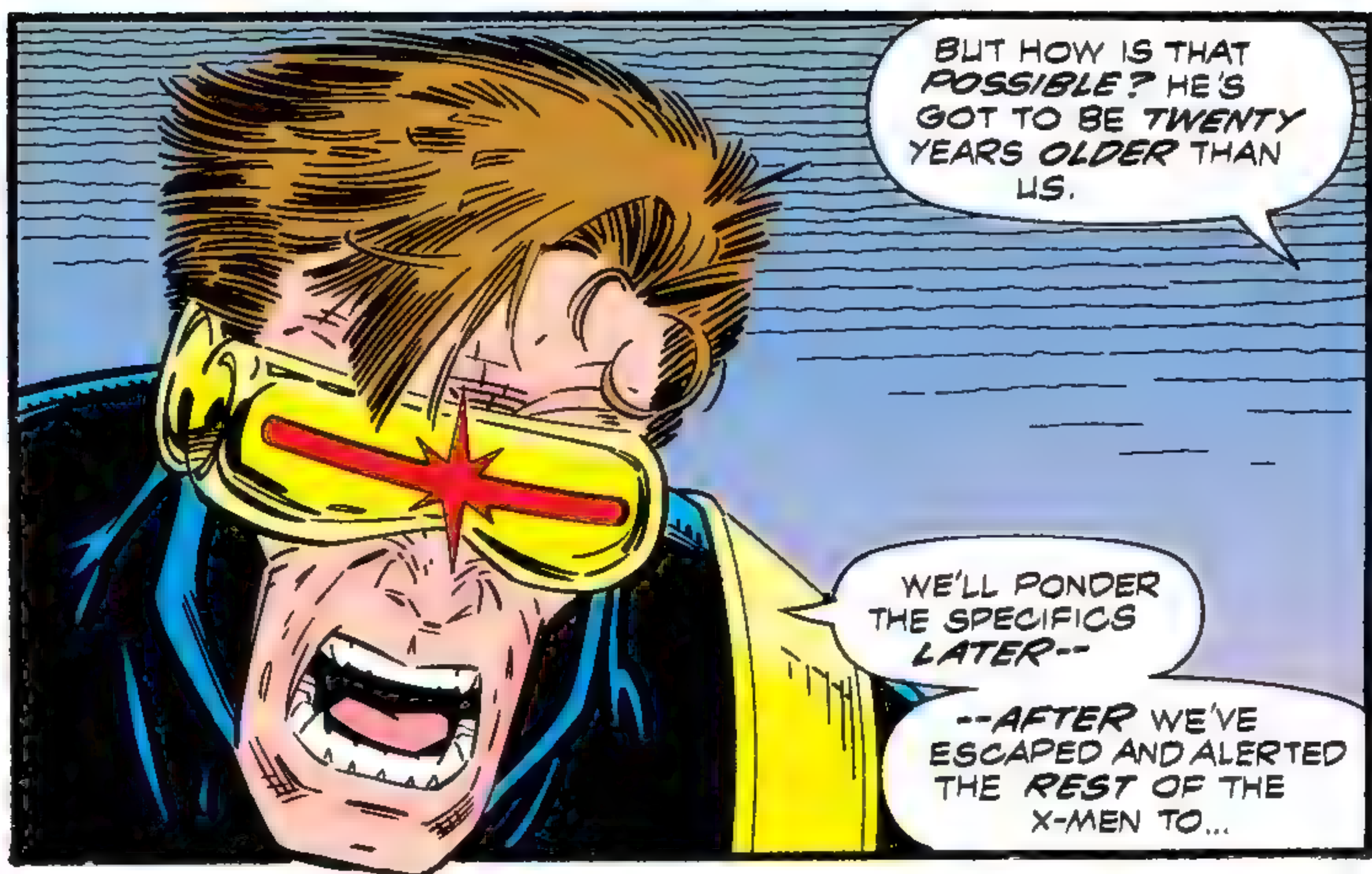
... WHY
US?

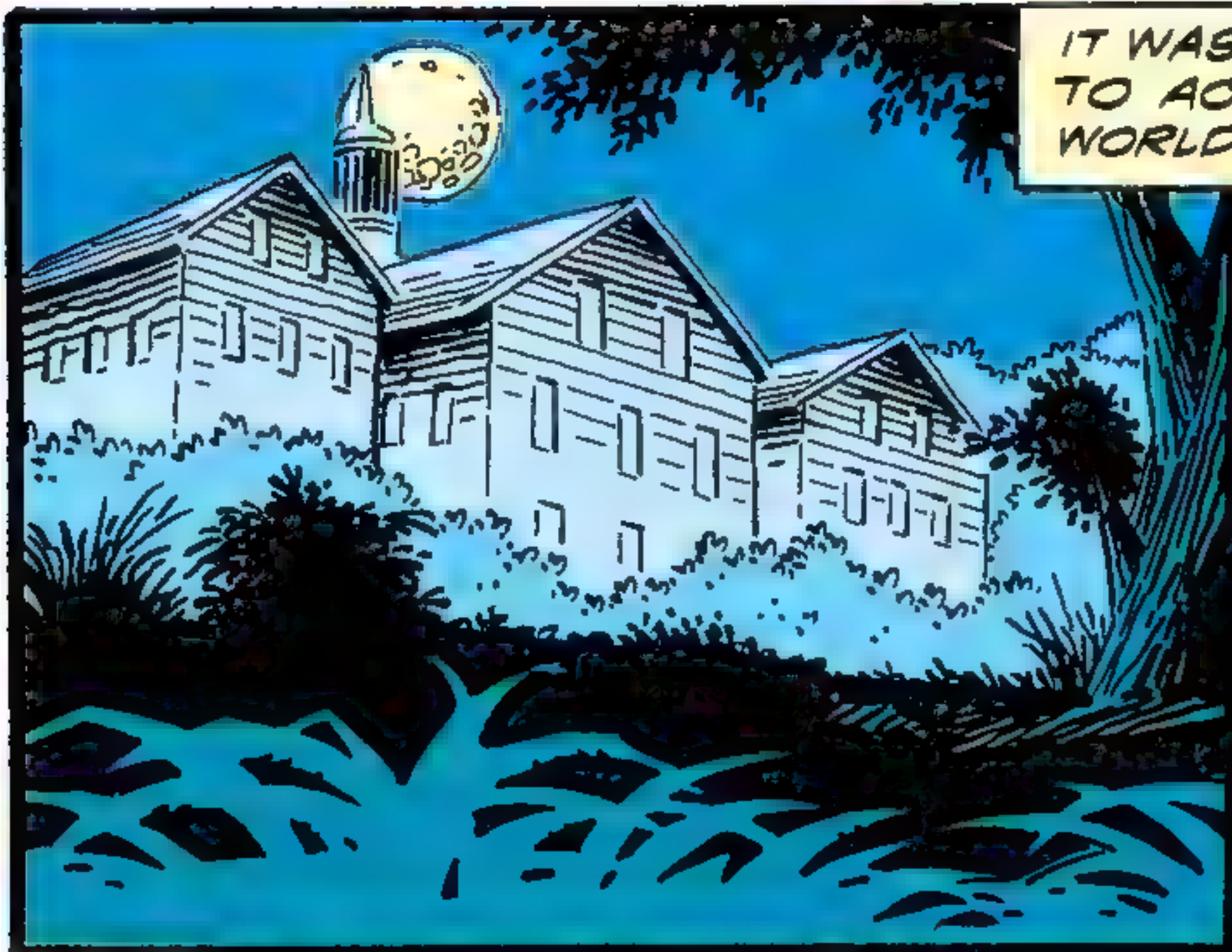
NEAR AS
I CAN TELL--

-- THIS "STRYFE"
BLAMES YOU AND
ME...

... FOR SOME-
THING THAT
HAPPENED IN
HIS PAST.

A SINGLE
EVENT WHICH
CHANGED HIS
LIFE.





IT WAS NEVER HIS INTENT
TO ACTUALLY RULE THE
WORLD.

INSTEAD, APOCALYPSE WAS
CONTENT--DETERMINED--TO
ASSUME THE ROLE OF "CARE-
TAKER" TO HIS FELLOW
MUTANTS.

HE HAS SPENT THE PAST
SEVERAL CENTURIES OF
HIS LIFE PRUNING AND
CUTTING--

--WHEN NECESSARY,
HACKING AND
SLASHING--

-- AT THE GENETIC
WEEDS WHICH THREATEN
TO STRANGLE THE EVER
GROWING BRANCH OF
HUMANITY KNOWN AS
HOMO-SUPERIOR.

OVER THE YEARS,
HE HAS MADE
MANY ENEMIES...

... AND PRECIOUS
FEW ALLIES.

SUFFICIENTLY
RECOVERED FROM
MY... CONFRONTATION...
WITH STRYFE--*

*X-FORCE#17--Bob

--WE CAN NOW
RESUME OUR
NEGOTIATIONS.

OH? WERE WE IN THE
MIDDLE OF A DEAL
WHEN YOU PASSED OUT
ON THE FRONT STOOP?

MORE TO
THE POINT--

-- WHY DO YOU
BELIEVE YOU ARE OF
ANY USE TO US?

...I CAN DO
WHAT YOU CAN
NOT.

BECAUSE,
STORM...
HAVOK...

I CAN SAVE
YOUR SACRED
XAVIER.

YOUR SERVICES
IN EXCHANGE FOR
OURS, AS YOU
HAVE SAID.

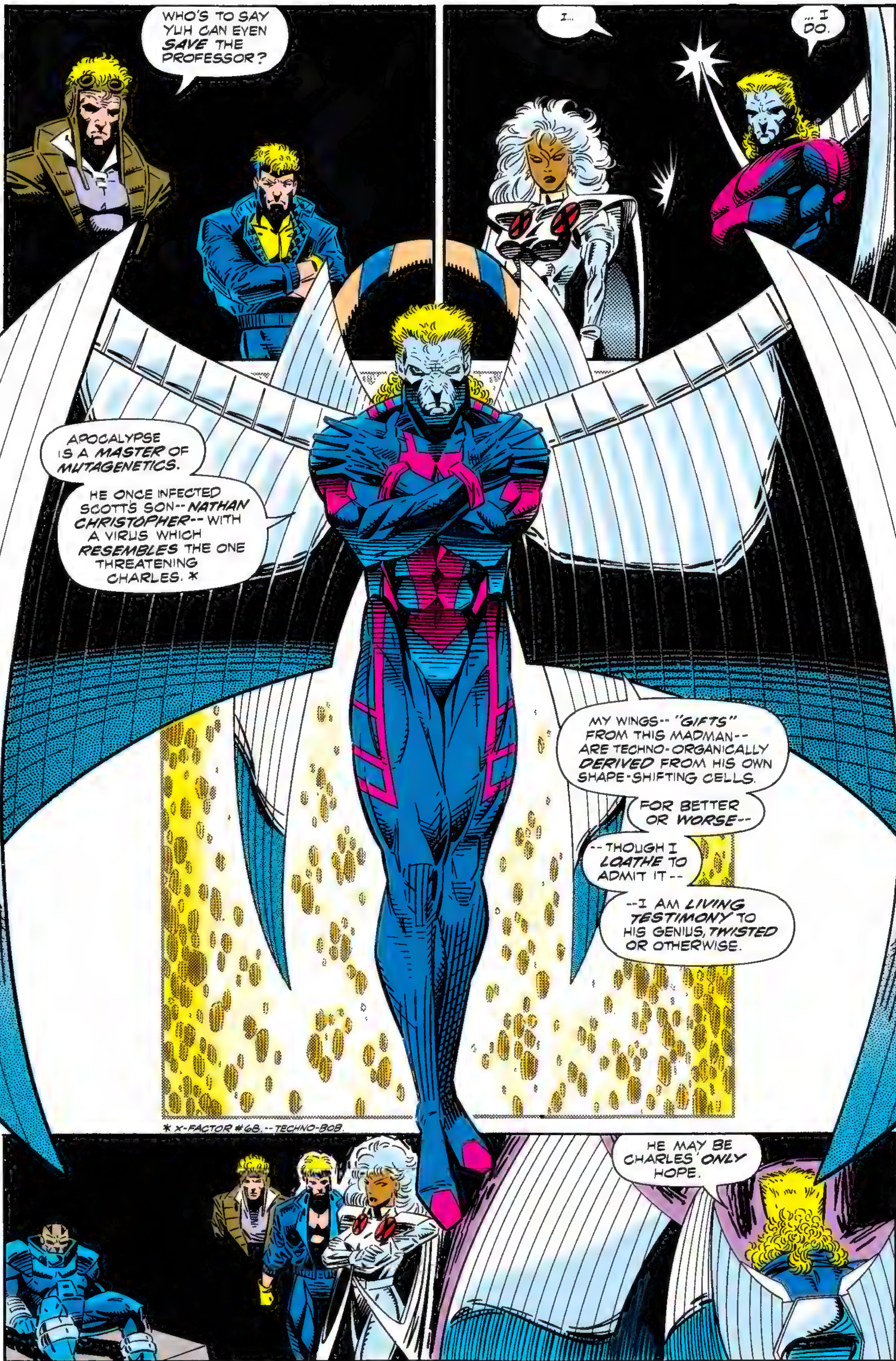
BUT, IN THE
GODDESS'
NAME--

-- WHY SHOULD
WE TRUST YOU?

HALF YOUR
NUMBER ARE
IMPRISONED--

--OR HAVE
FALLEN IN
BATTLE.

FRANKLY, CHILD--
YOU HAVE NO
CHOICE.



WHO'S TO SAY
YUH CAN EVEN
SAVE THE
PROFESSOR?

I...

... I
DO.

APOCALYPSE
IS A MASTER OF
MUTAGENETICS.

HE ONCE INFECTED
SCOTT'S SON-- **NATHAN
CHRISTOPHER**-- WITH
A VIRUS WHICH
RESEMBLES THE ONE
THREATENING
CHARLES. *

MY WINGS-- "**GIFTS**"
FROM THIS MADMAN--
ARE TECHNO-ORGANICALLY
DERIVED FROM HIS OWN
SHAPE-SHIFTING CELLS.

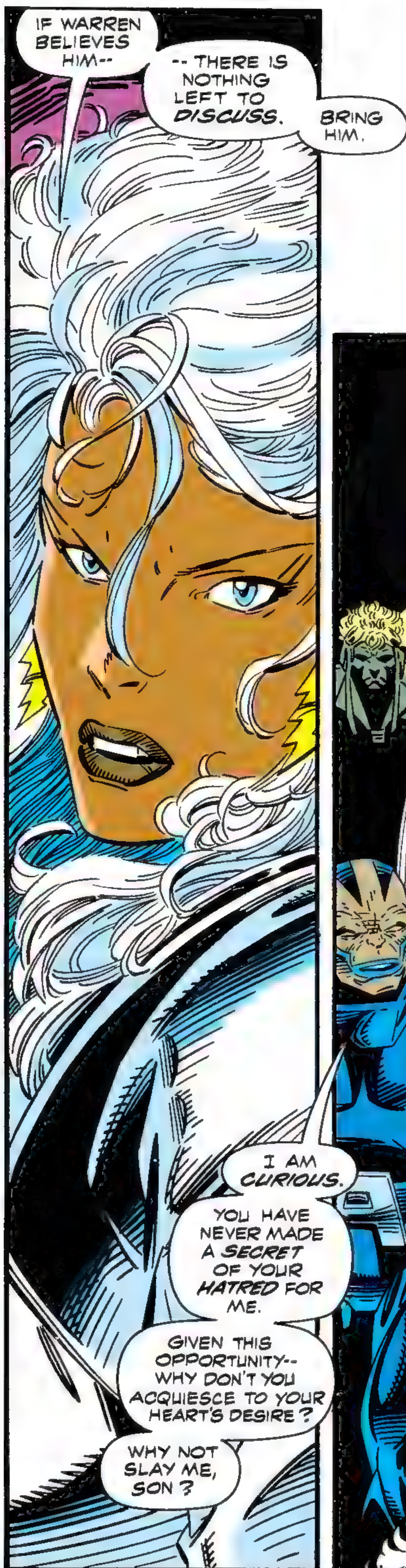
FOR BETTER
OR WORSE--

--THOUGH I
LOATHE TO
ADMIT IT--

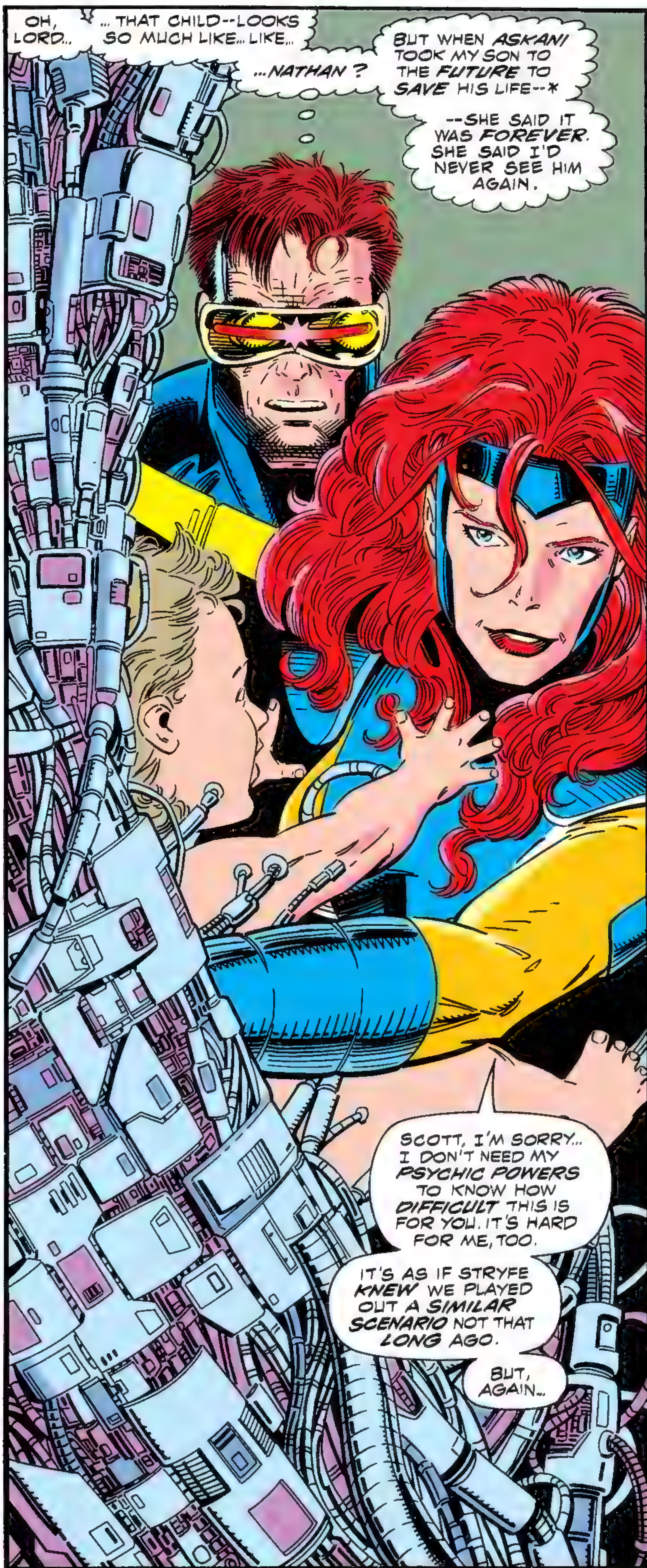
--I AM **LIVING
TESTIMONY** TO
HIS GENIUS, **TWISTED**
OR OTHERWISE.

* X-FACTOR #68. -- TECHNO-BOB.

HE MAY BE
CHARLES' ONLY
HOPE.







OH, LORD...
... THAT CHILD--LOOKS
SO MUCH LIKE... LIKE...

...NATHAN?

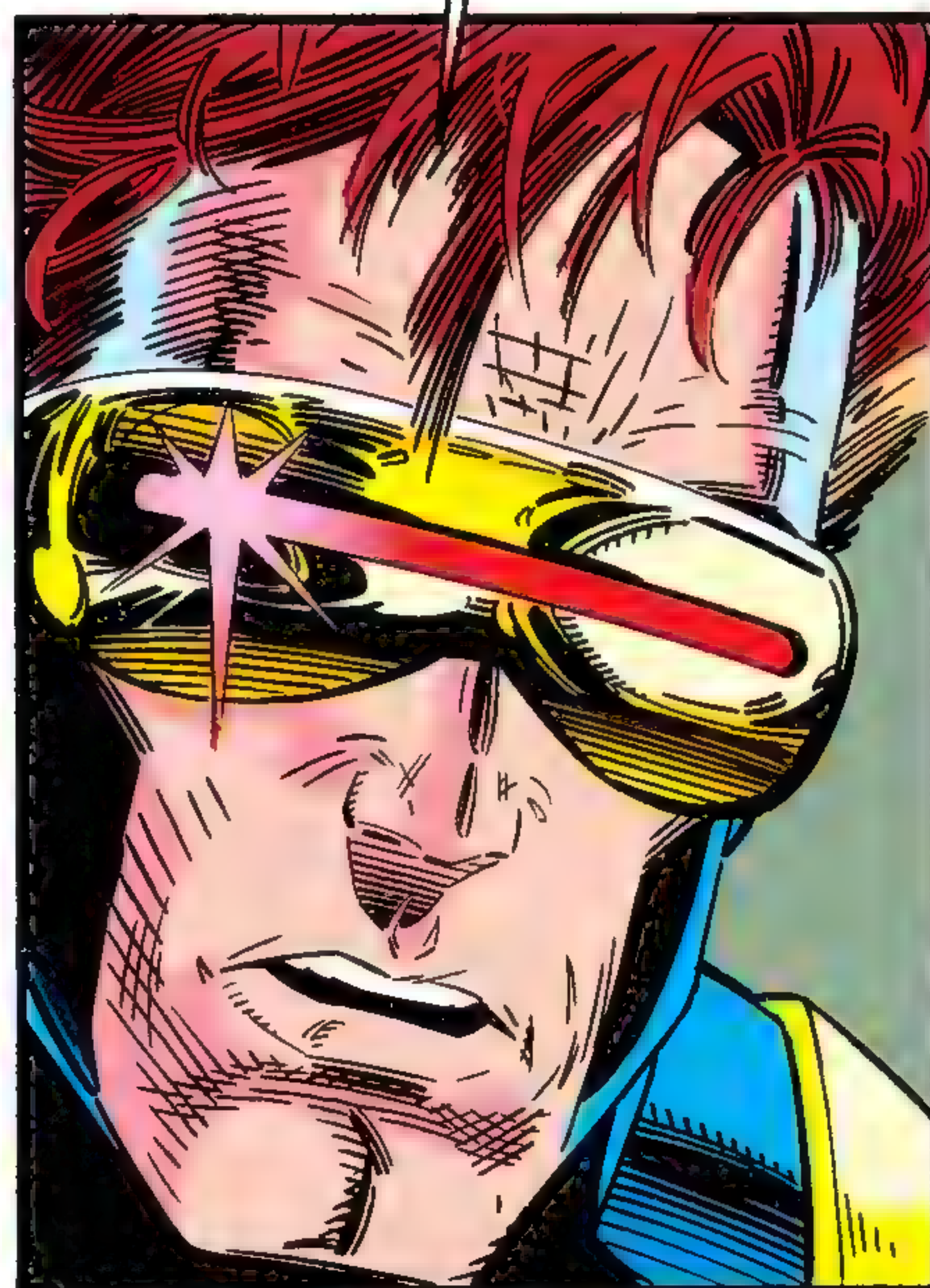
BUT WHEN ASKANI
TOOK MY SON TO
THE FUTURE TO
SAVE HIS LIFE--*

--SHE SAID IT
WAS FOREVER.
SHE SAID I'D
NEVER SEE HIM
AGAIN.

SCOTT, I'M SORRY...
I DON'T NEED MY
PSYCHIC POWERS
TO KNOW HOW
DIFFICULT THIS IS
FOR YOU. IT'S HARD
FOR ME, TOO.

IT'S AS IF STRYFE
KNEW WE PLAYED
OUT A SIMILAR
SCENARIO NOT THAT
LONG AGO.

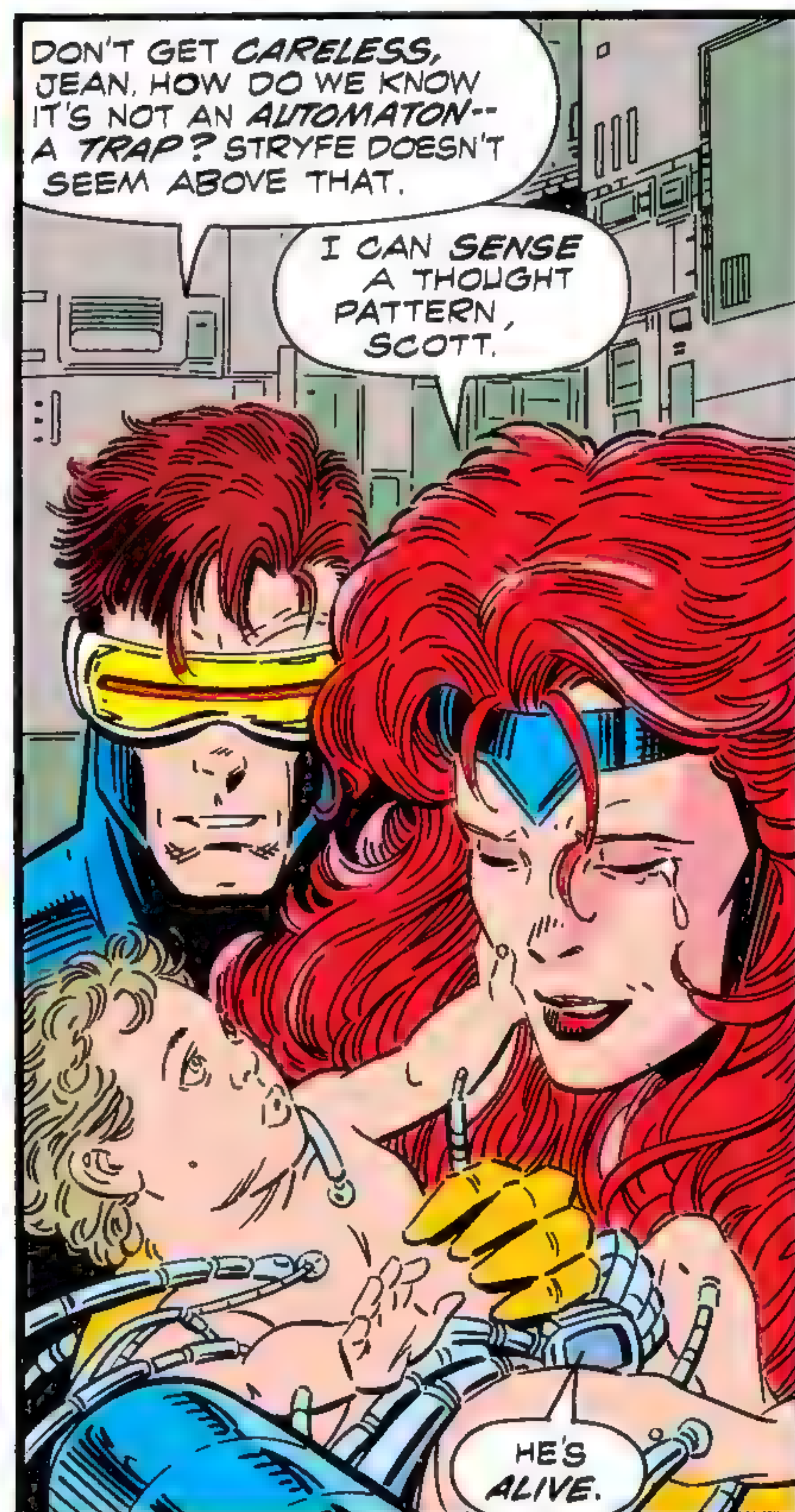
BUT,
AGAIN...



... HOW COULD
HE KNOW ?

YES. HOW
WOULD HE
UNLESS--

--HE
WAS
THERE?



DON'T GET CARELESS,
JEAN. HOW DO WE KNOW
IT'S NOT AN AUTOMATON--
A TRAP? STRYFE DOESN'T
SEEM ABOVE THAT.

I CAN SENSE
A THOUGHT
PATTERN,
SCOTT.

HE'S
ALIVE.



ALAS, A STATE OF
BEING HE WILL NOT
ENJOY FOR MUCH
LONGER!

THIS CHILD'S
MIND HAS BEEN
GENETICALLY
LINKED WITH
MY OWN CON-
SCIOUSNESS--

--SIMILARLY, HIS
BODY IS INTERWOVEN
WITH THE LIFE SUPPORT
SYSTEM OF THIS ENTIRE
COMPLEX!

YOU'RE SAYING
WE'RE POWERLESS
TO STOP YOU WITH-
OUT HURTING THE
BOY? YOU SON
OF--

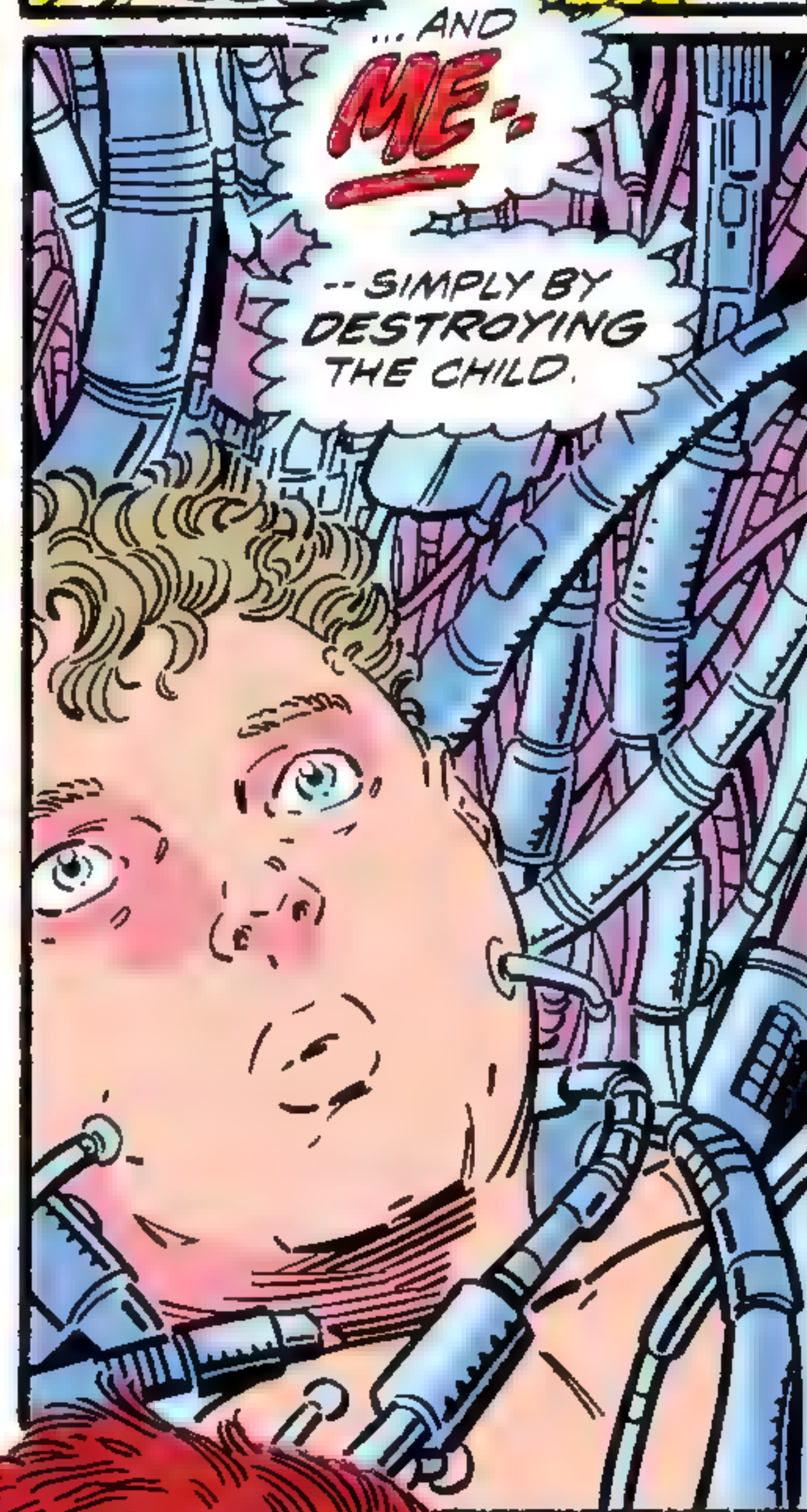
HOW COULD YOU?
HIDING BEHIND
THE LIFE OF AN
INFANT, STRYFE?



YOU MIS-
UNDERSTAND.
I HIDE BEHIND
NOTHING. RATHER
I INVITE.

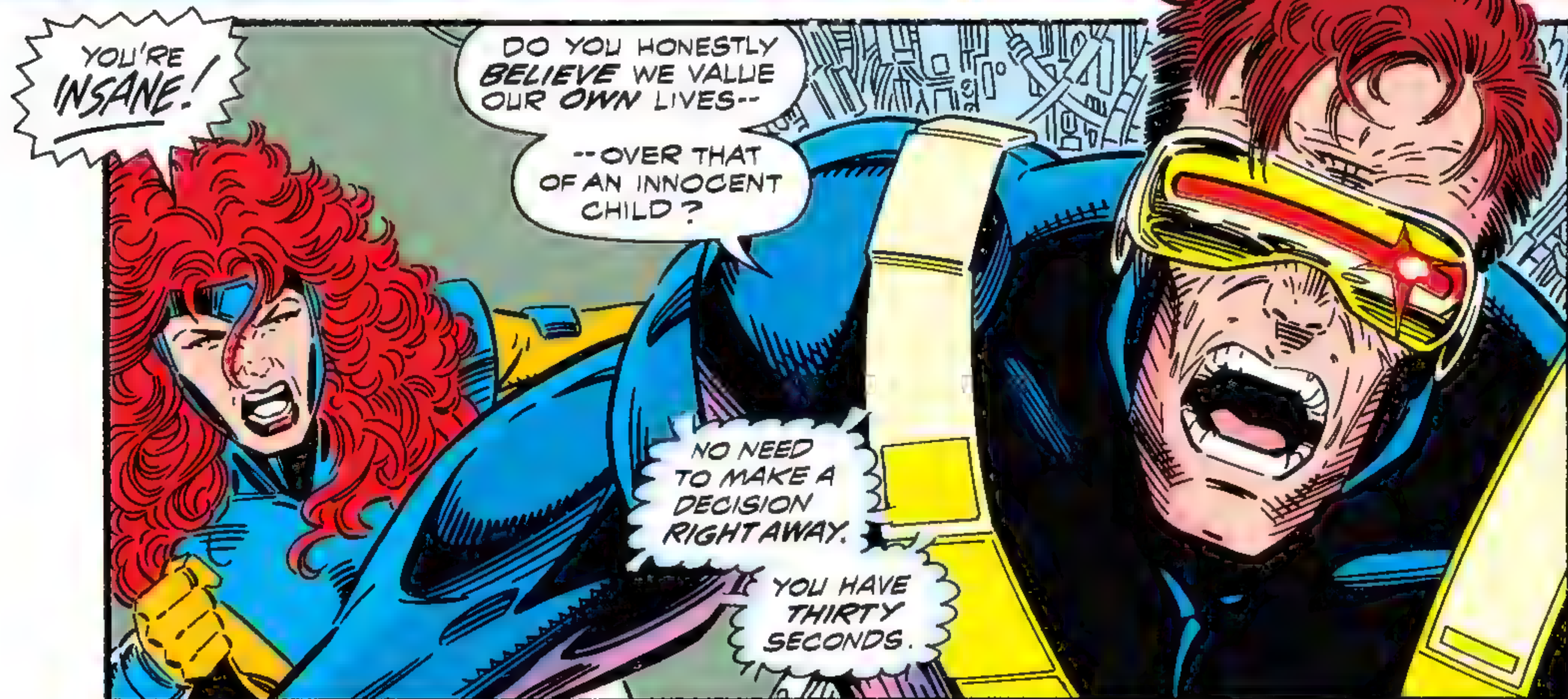
YOU HAVE THE
OPPORTUNITY
TO RID THE
WORLD OF THE
DARK RIDERS...

...THIS APOCALYPTIC
TOMB OF PAIN
AND MISERY...



...AND
ME--

--SIMPLY BY
DESTROYING
THE CHILD.



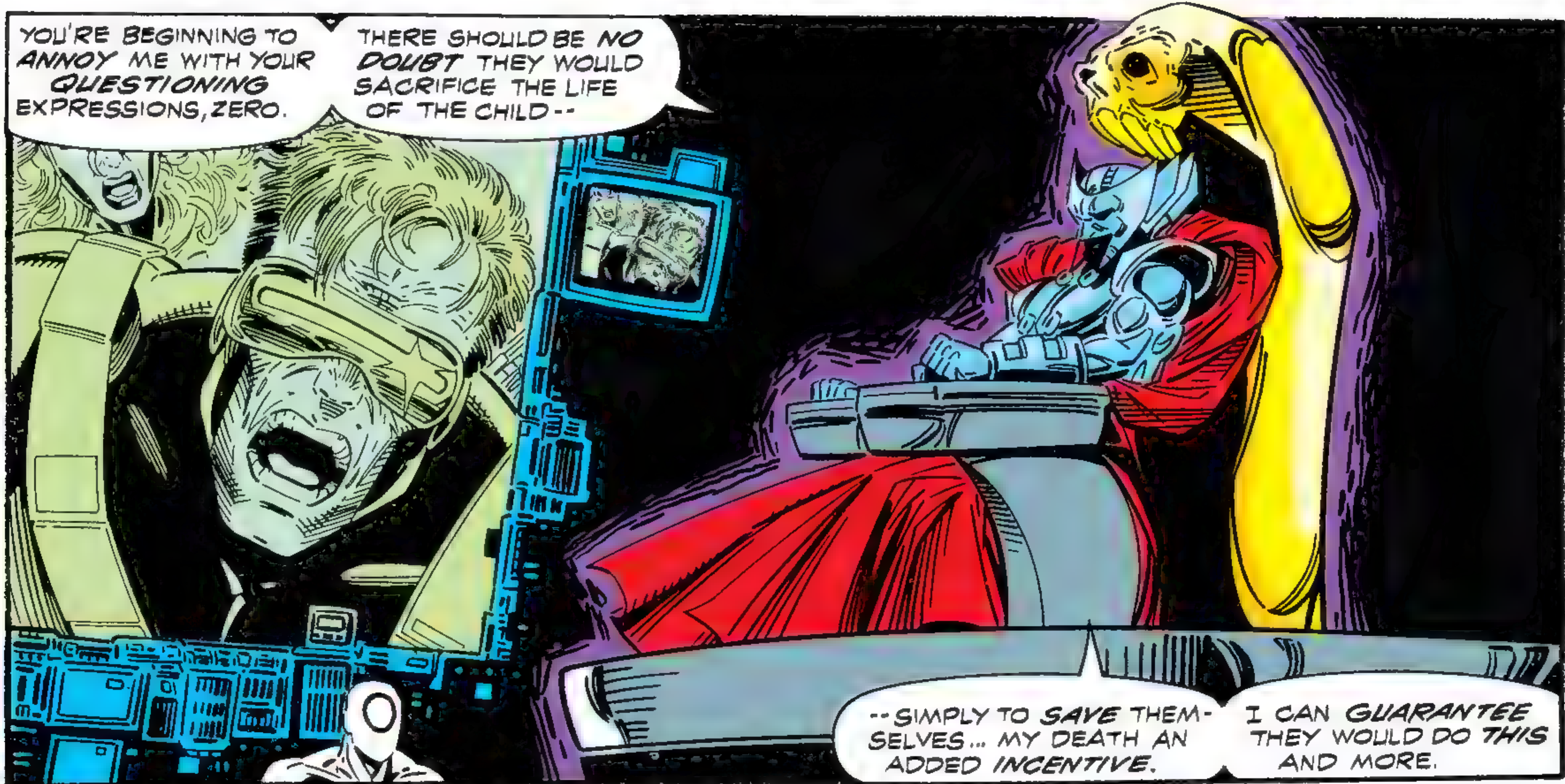
YOU'RE
INSANE!

DO YOU HONESTLY
BELIEVE WE VALUE
OUR OWN LIVES--

--OVER THAT
OF AN INNOCENT
CHILD?

NO NEED
TO MAKE A
DECISION
RIGHT AWAY.

IF YOU HAVE
THIRTY
SECONDS.

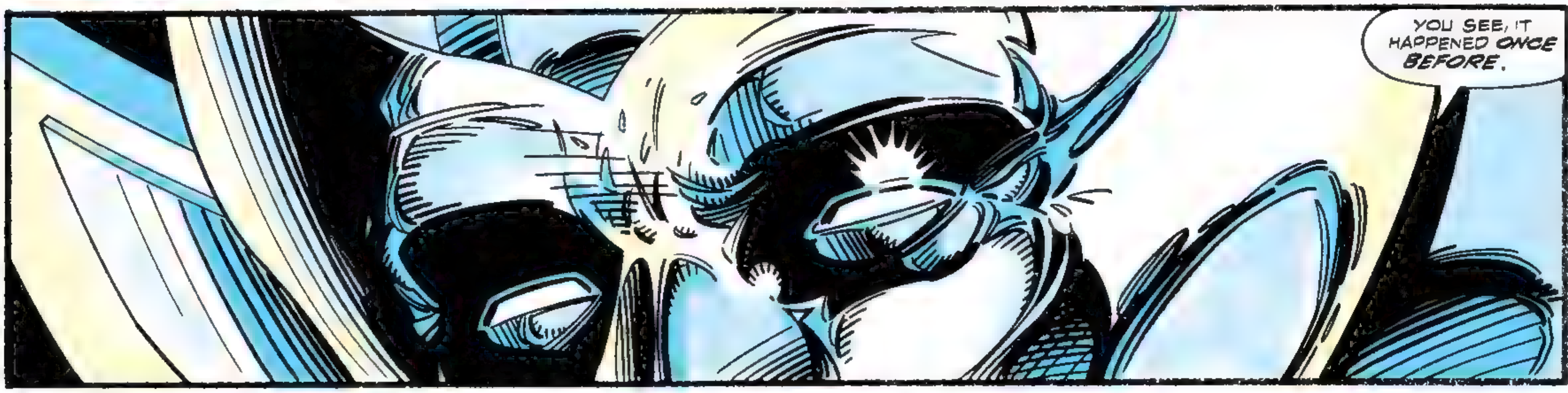


YOU'RE BEGINNING TO ANNOY ME WITH YOUR QUESTIONING EXPRESSIONS, ZERO.

THERE SHOULD BE NO DOUBT THEY WOULD SACRIFICE THE LIFE OF THE CHILD--

--SIMPLY TO SAVE THEMSELVES... MY DEATH AN ADDED INCENTIVE.

I CAN GUARANTEE THEY WOULD DO THIS AND MORE.



YOU SEE, IT HAPPENED ONCE BEFORE.



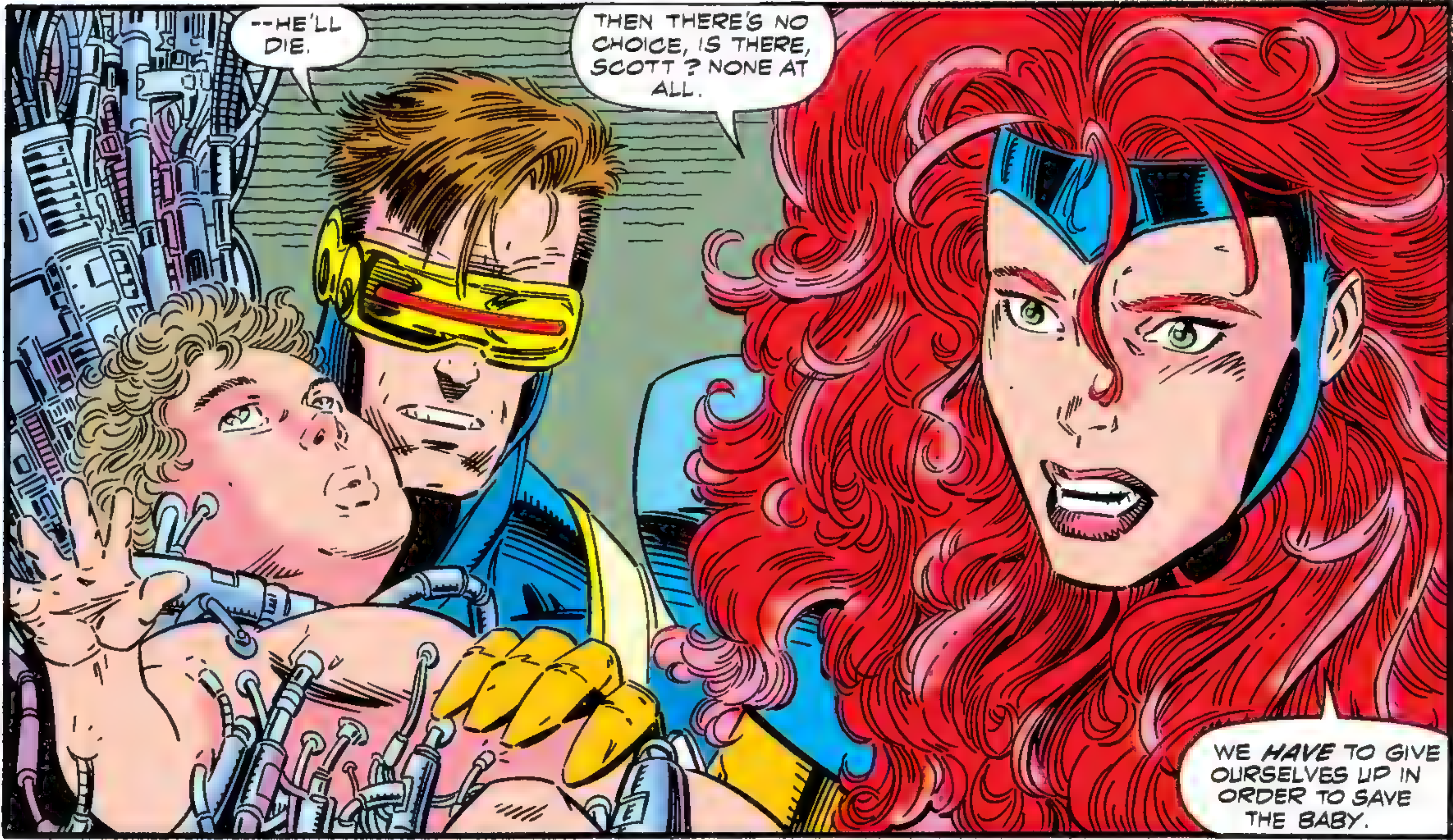
ANYTHING?

IF I WAS HANK OR FORGE--

--I'D FIND A WAY TO FREE THE BABY FROM THIS CIRCUITRY WITHOUT HURTING HIM.

--OR HAD A MONTH TO FIGURE THIS OUT--

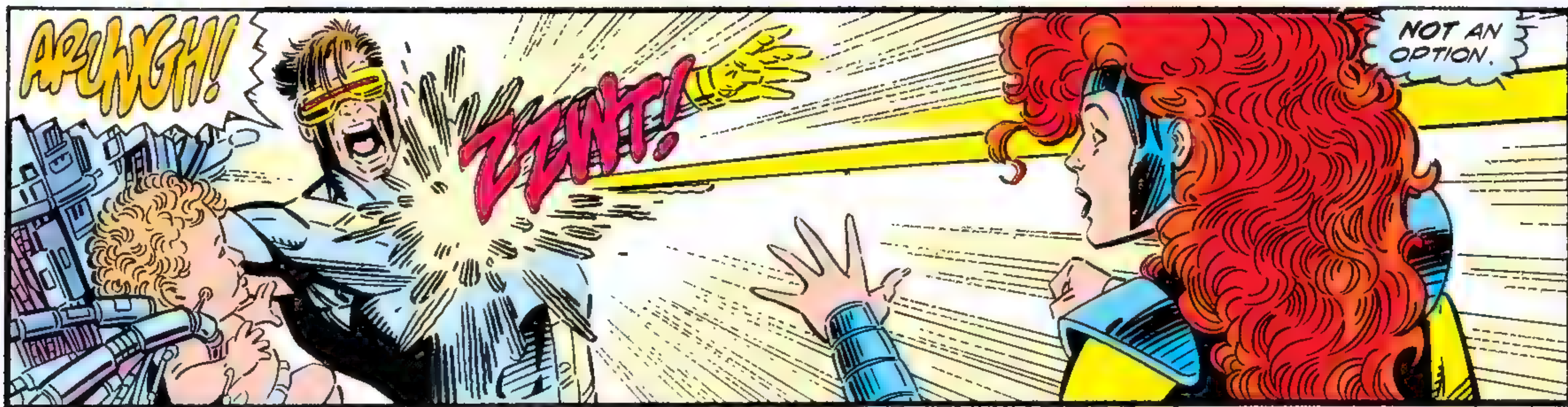
I'M AFRAID IF WE ATTEMPT TO REMOVE HIM NOW--

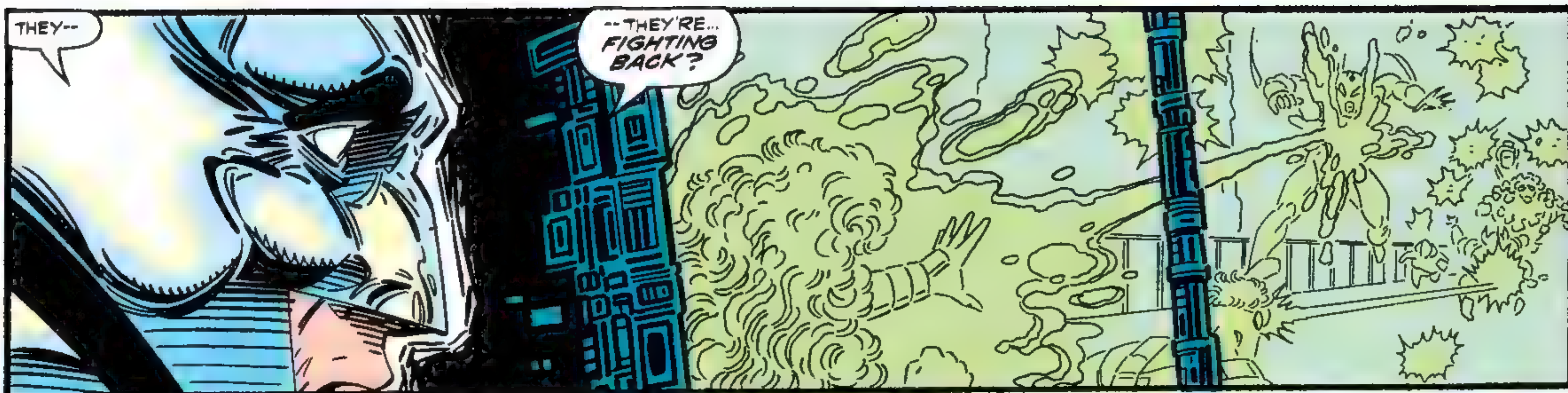


--HE'LL DIE.

THEN THERE'S NO CHOICE, IS THERE, SCOTT? NONE AT ALL.

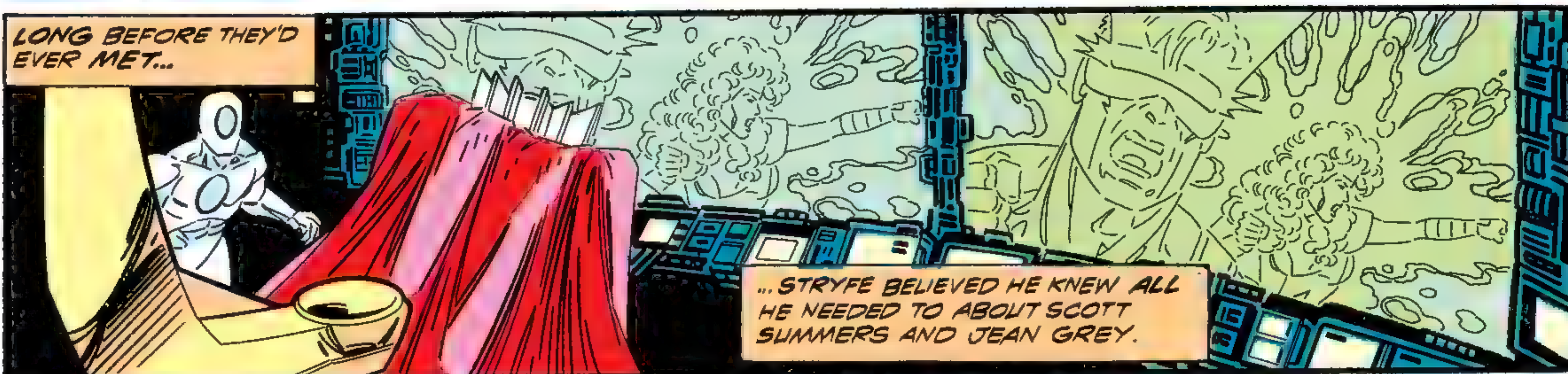
WE HAVE TO GIVE OURSELVES UP IN ORDER TO SAVE THE BABY.





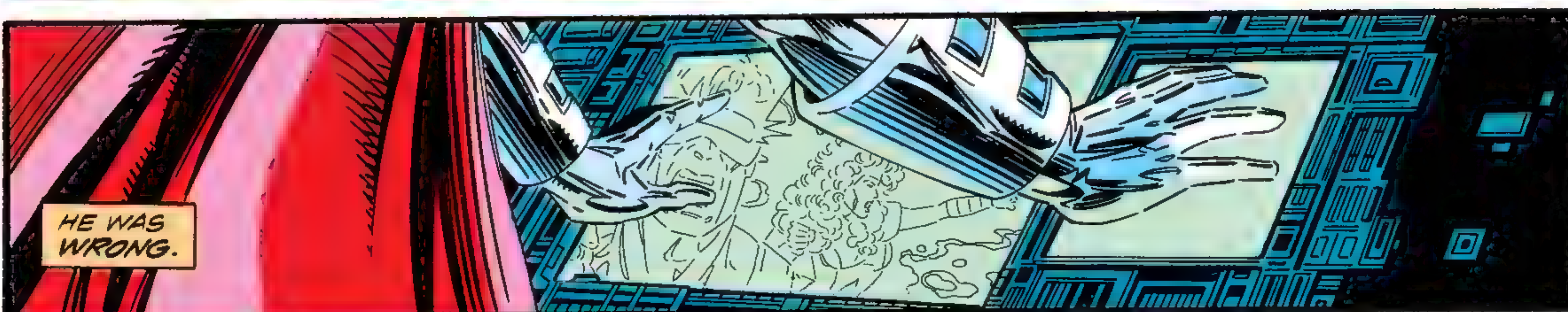
THEY--

--THEY'RE...
FIGHTING
BACK?



LONG BEFORE THEY'D
EVER MET...

... STRYFE BELIEVED HE KNEW ALL
HE NEEDED TO ABOUT SCOTT
SUMMERS AND JEAN GREY.



HE WAS
WRONG.



IT IS NOT A REALIZATION
WHICH COMES EASY TO
THIS MAN...

... OR, MORE
IMPORTANTLY,
TO THE CHILD
WITHIN HIM.

HE HAS SPENT A LIFE-
TIME HATING THEM FOR
A MULTITUDE OF SINS.

SINS HE CAN NO
LONGER BE SURE
THEY COMMITTED.

THEIR ACTIONS THIS
DAY HAVE PUT A LIE
TO HIS MEMORIES.

HIS RESOLVE
HAS BEEN
REPLACED BY
DOUBT...

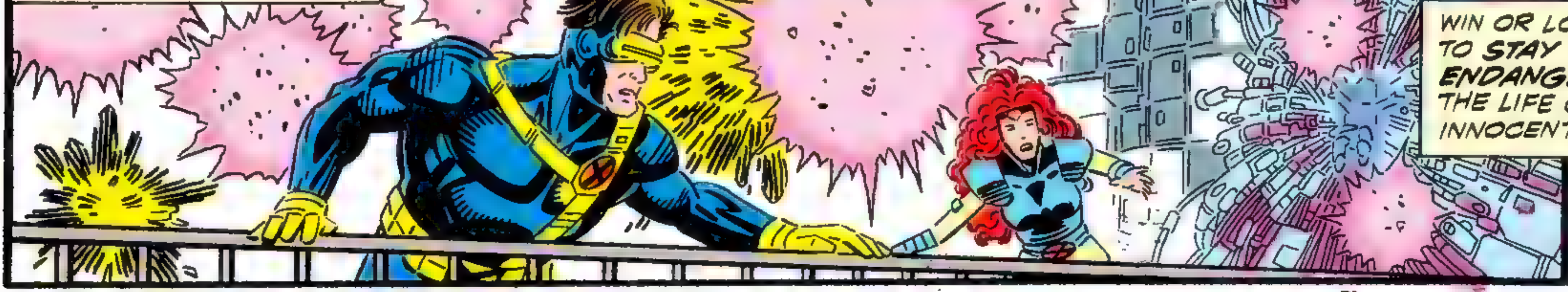
... WHILE HIS
HATRED--

--IS ALL THAT HE
HAS LEFT TO CALL
HIS OWN...

WITHOUT SO MUCH AS
A **THOUGHT** BETWEEN
THEM--

--THEY KNOW WHAT
THEY HAVE TO DO.

WIN OR LOSE,
TO **STAY** WOULD
ENDANGER
THE LIFE OF AN
INNOCENT.



RATHER,
THEN...

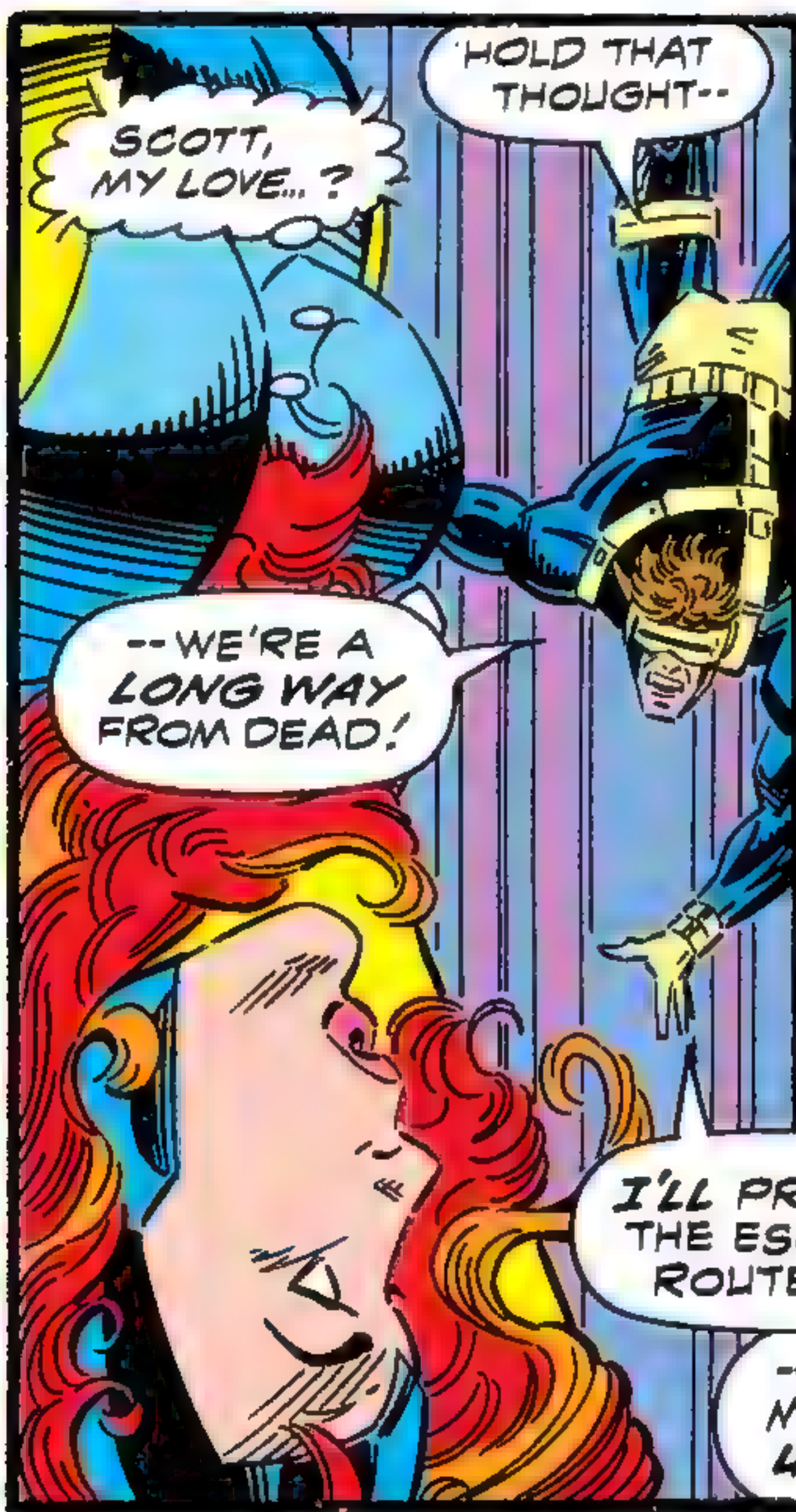
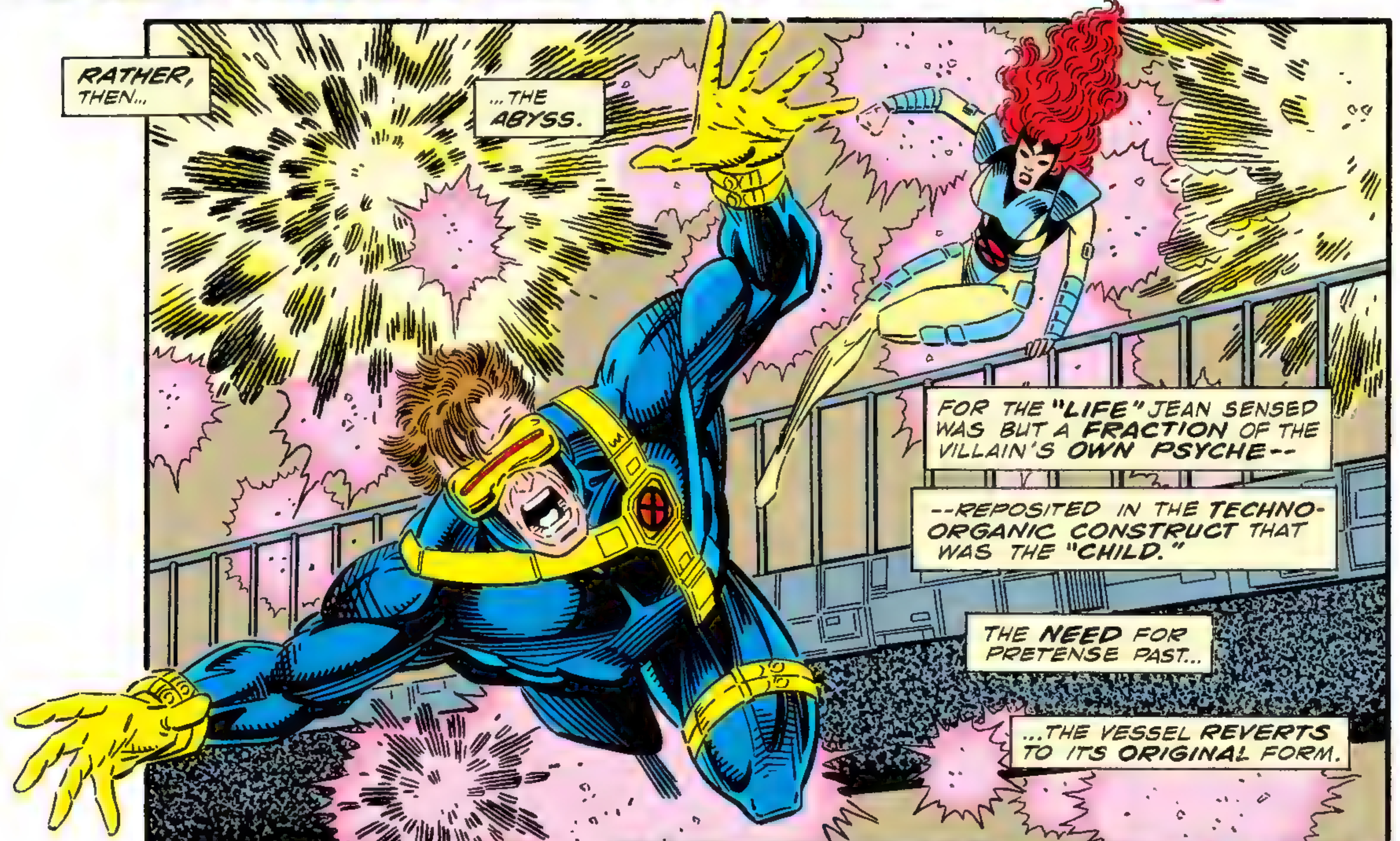
...THE
ABYSS.

FOR THE "LIFE" JEAN SENSED
WAS BUT A **FRACTION** OF THE
VILLAIN'S OWN **PSYCHE**--

--REPOSITED IN THE **TECHNO-
ORGANIC** CONSTRUCT THAT
WAS THE "CHILD."

THE **NEED** FOR
PRETENSE PAST...

...THE **VESSEL** REVERTS
TO ITS **ORIGINAL** FORM.



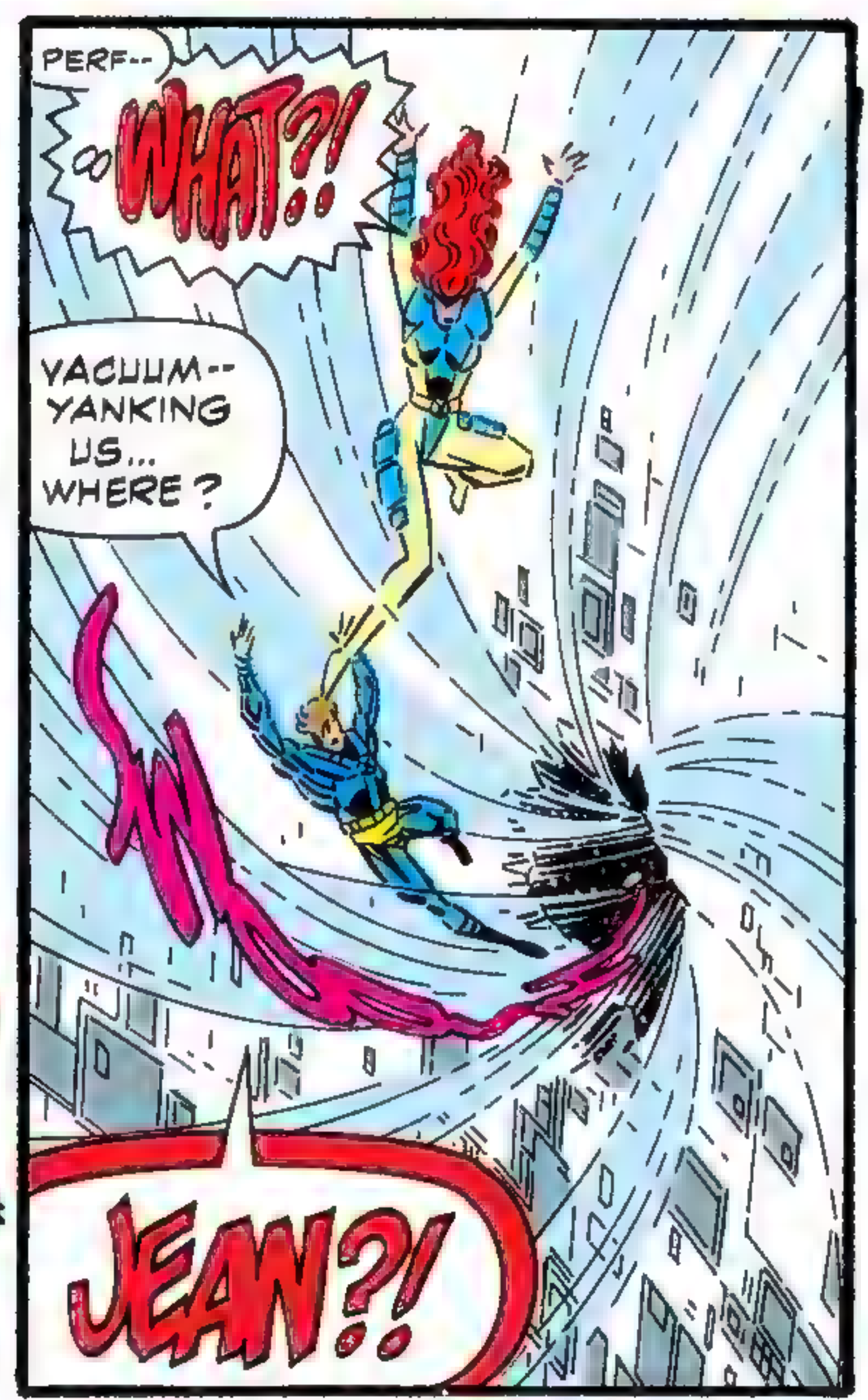
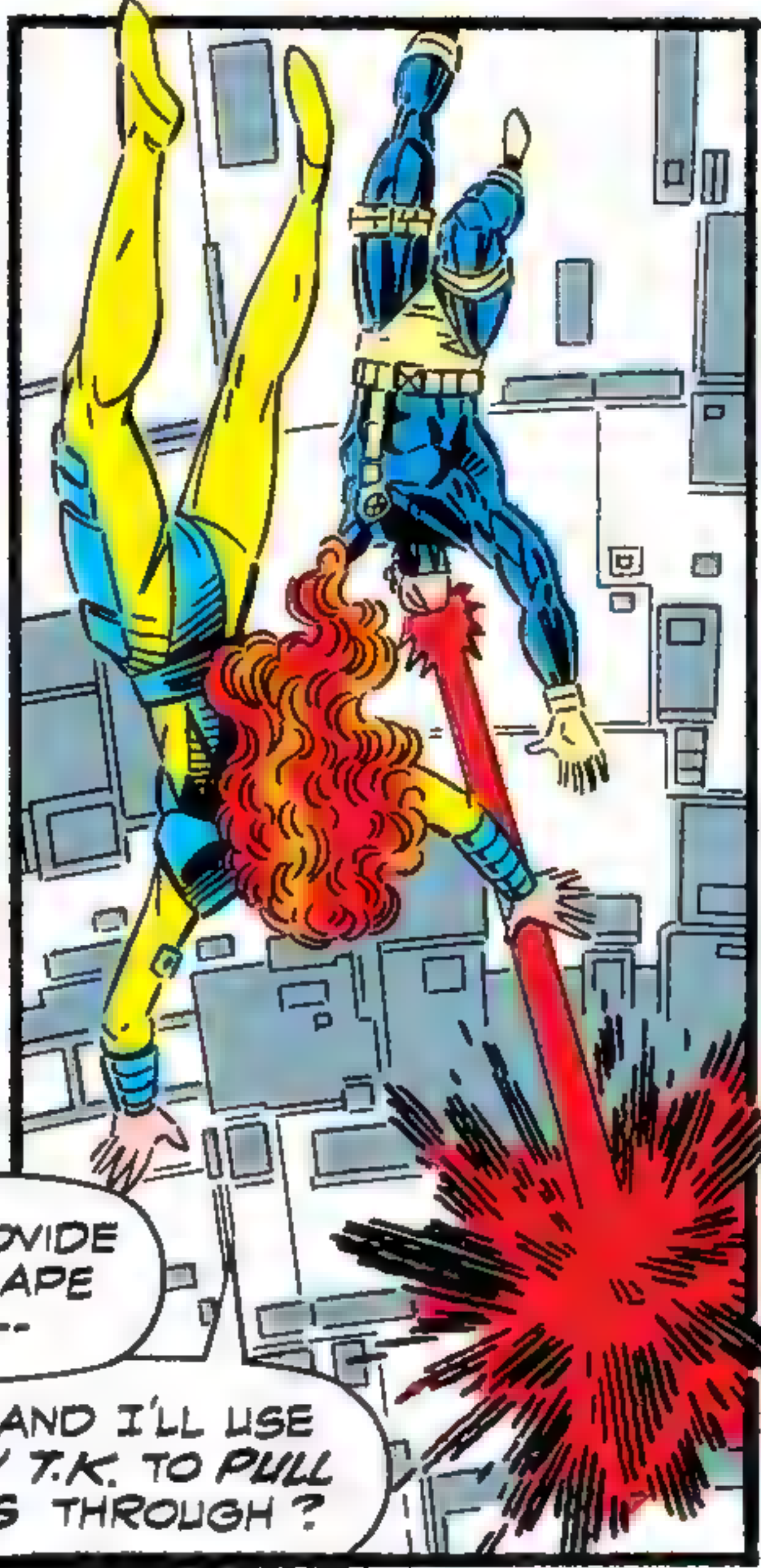
SCOTT,
MY LOVE...?

--WE'RE A
LONG WAY
FROM DEAD!

HOLD THAT
THOUGHT--

I'LL PROVIDE
THE **ESCAPE**
ROUTE--

--AND I'LL USE
MY **T.K.** TO **PULL**
US THROUGH?

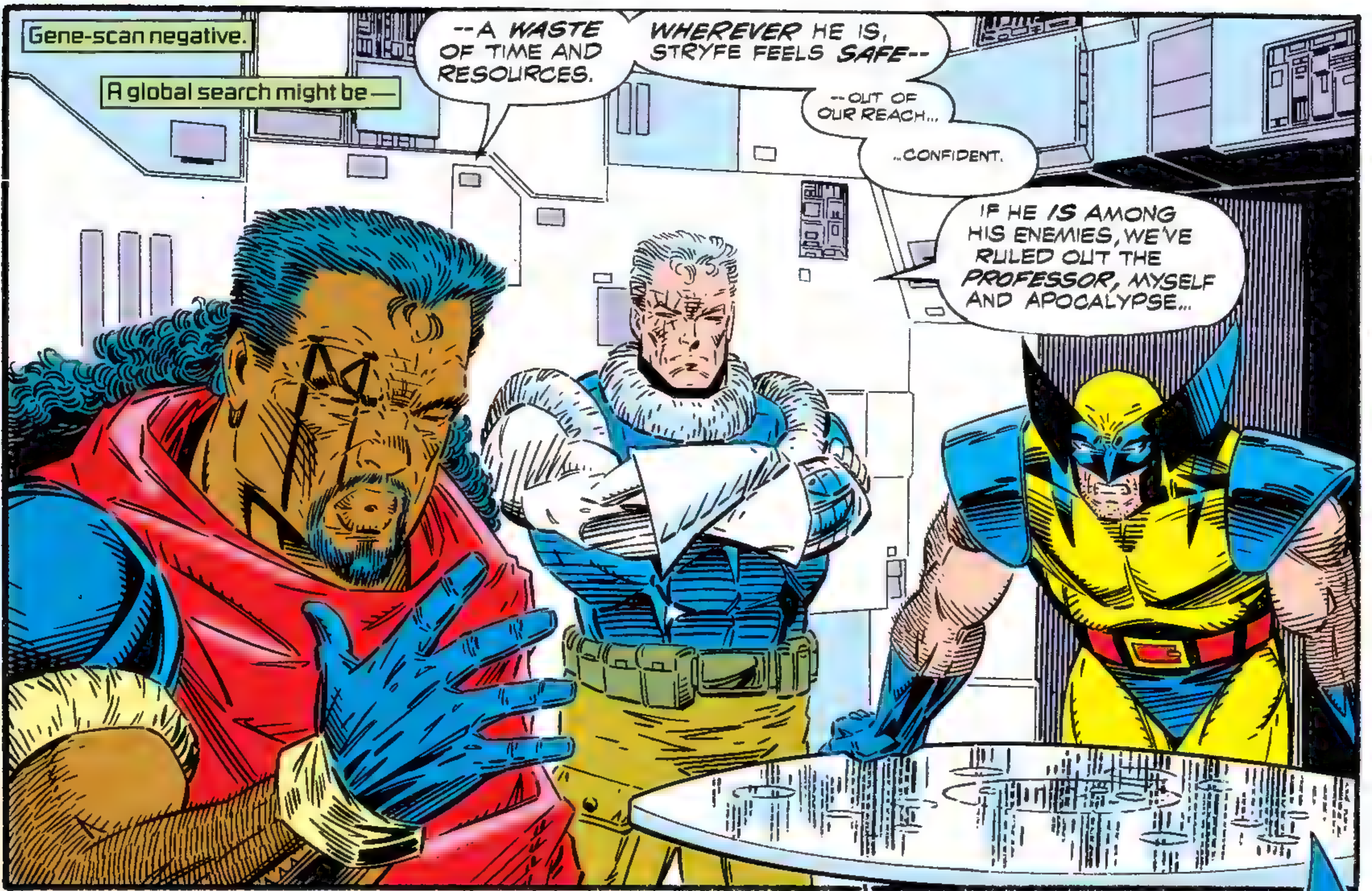


PERF--

WHAT?!

VACUUM--
YANKING
US...
WHERE?

JEAN?!



Gene-scan negative.

A global search might be —

-- A WASTE
OF TIME AND
RESOURCES.

WHEREVER HE IS,
STRYFE FEELS *SAFE*--

-- OUT OF
OUR REACH...

...CONFIDENT.

IF HE *IS* AMONG
HIS ENEMIES, WE'VE
RULED OUT THE
PROFESSOR, MYSELF
AND APOCALYPSE...

... SO WHERE ON EARTH
COULD HE HAVE TAKEN
SCOTT AND JEAN ?

-- THAT'S **IT--!**
IT'S WHY JEANNIE
HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO
FIRE OFF A *PSYCHIC*
CRY FOR HELP.

TILL
NOW.

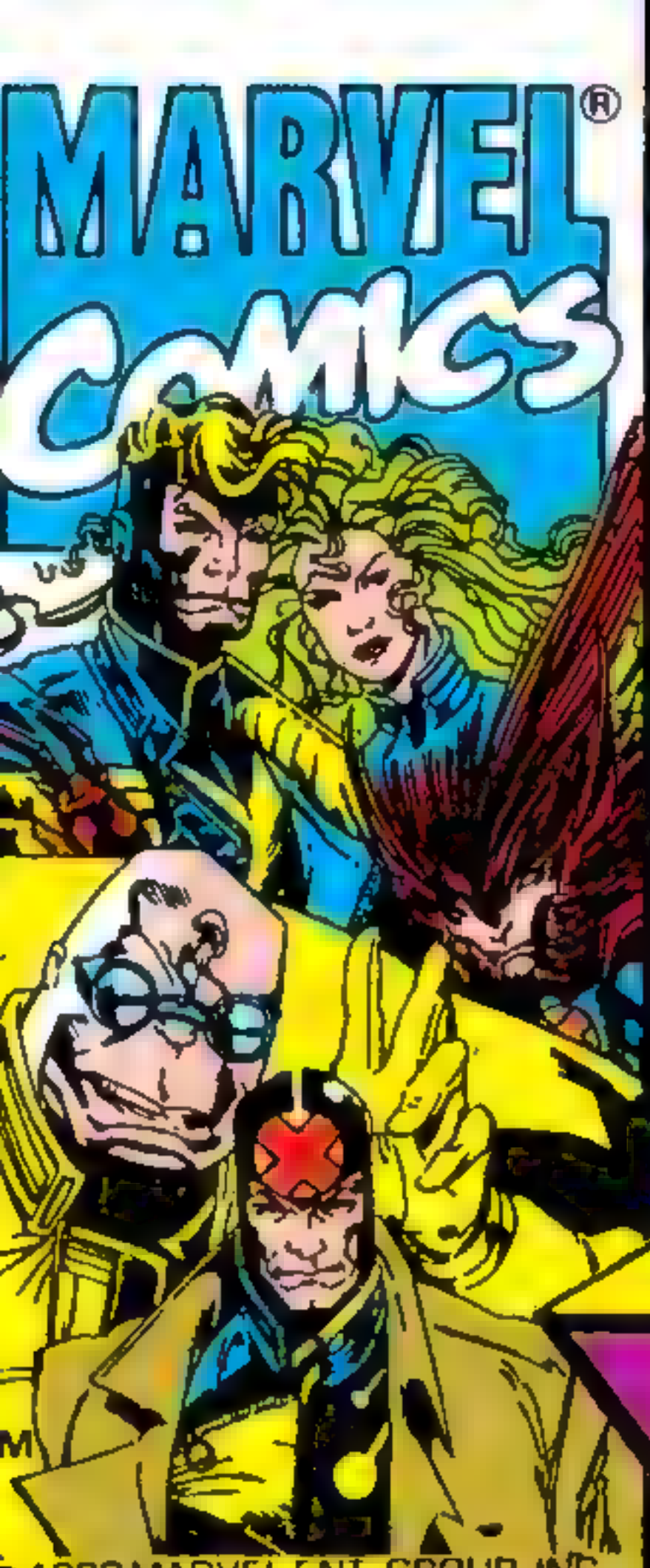
THEY'RE IN THE
LAST PLACE
X-FACTOR BATTLED
APOCALYPSE AND
HIS DARK RIDERS!

DON'T YOU SEE,
PEOPLE... ?



"THEY'RE NOT ON
THE EARTH AT ALL!"

-- TO BE CONTINUED
IN X-FACTOR #86!



X-CUTIONER'S SONG

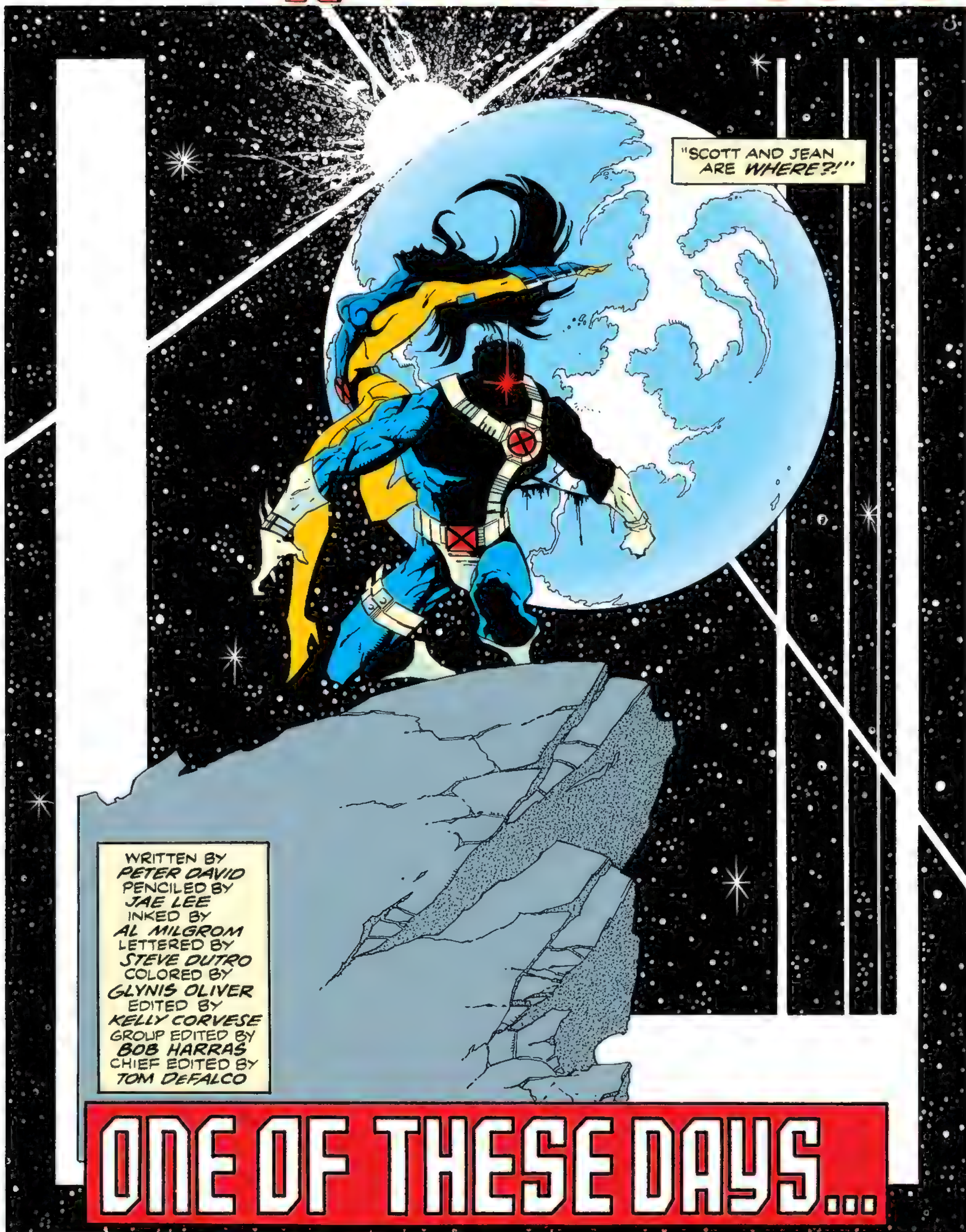
PART 10

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\$1.50 US
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86
JAN
APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY
02145



WHILE CYCLOPS AND JEAN GREY ESCAPE FROM THEIR CAPTOR, STRYFE, PROFESSOR XAVIER'S CONDITION WORSENS, AND THE X-MEN, X-FACTOR, AND X-FORCE ARE ABOUT TO TAKE THEIR BIGGEST LEAP OF FAITH BY ENTRUSTING THEIR MOST VAUNTED ENEMY, APOCALYPSE, TO SAVE THEIR MENTOR'S LIFE. STAN LEE PRESENTS . . .

PART 10 **X-CUTIONER'S SONG**



WRITTEN BY
PETER DAVID
PENCILED BY
JAE LEE
INKED BY
AL MILGROM
LETTERED BY
STEVE DUTRO
COLORED BY
GLYNIS OLIVER
EDITED BY
KELLY CORVESE
GROUP EDITED BY
BOB HARRAS
CHIEF EDITED BY
TOM DEFALCO

ONE OF THESE DAYS...

...POW! ZOOM!

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, THEY ARE: THE BEAST, ICEMAN, POLARIS, ARCHANGEL, HAVOK, VAL COOPER, STORM, PSYLOCKE.

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF VAL, THEY ARE MUTANTS. THEY ARE HOMO SUPERIOR. THEY ARE UNDER SIEGE. THEY ARE MEMBERS OF THE X-MEN AND X-FACTOR.

THEY ARE BELIEVERS IN THE DREAM OF THEIR DYING MENTOR, CHARLES XAVIER. FRIENDS AND TEAMMATES OF THE MISSING JEAN GREY AND SCOTT SUMMERS.

BUT IF ANY SINGLE WORD COULD SUM UP THEIR ESSENCE, THEIR GOALS--EVERYTHING THAT MAKES THEM WHAT THEY ARE AT THIS VERY MOMENT--

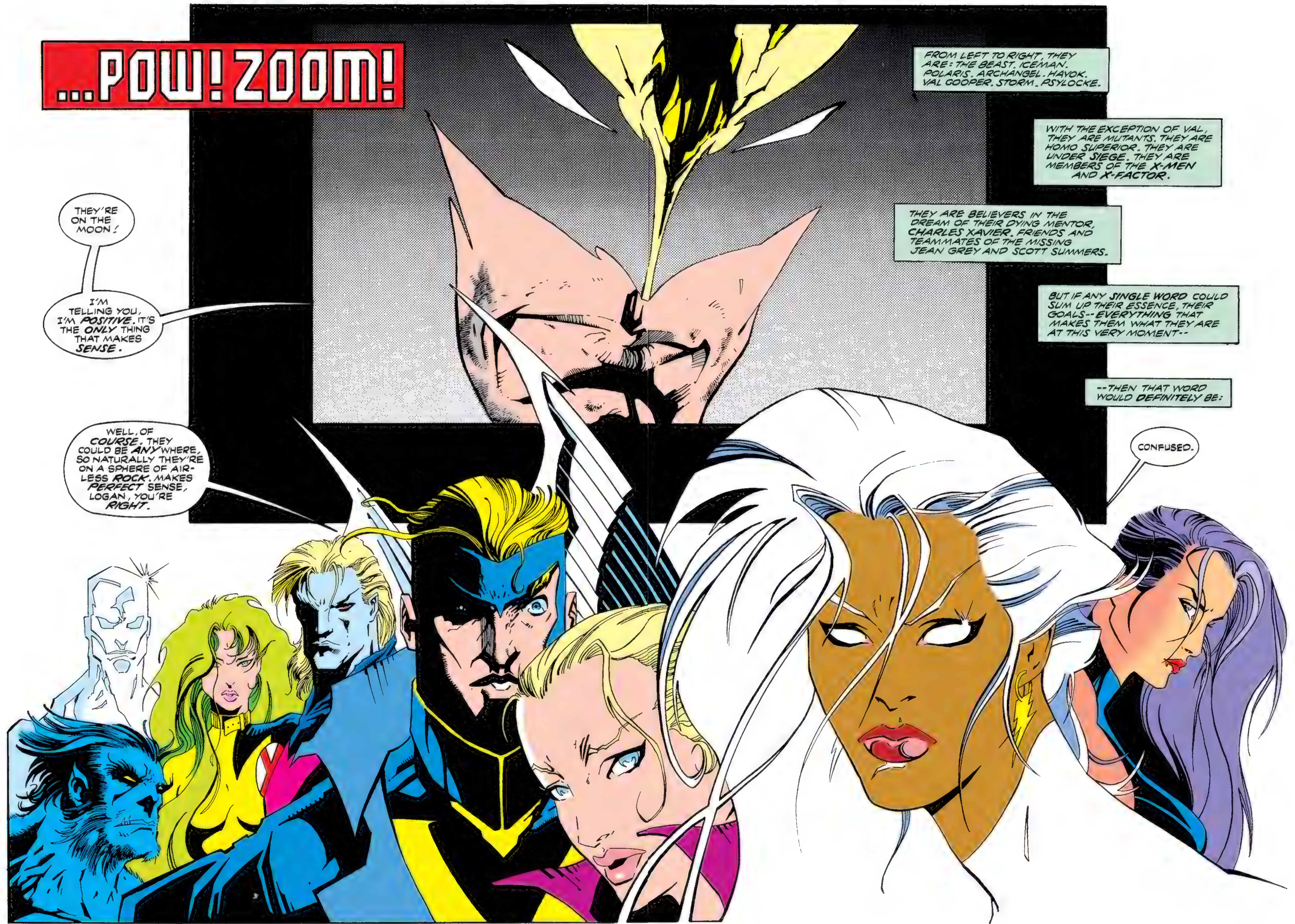
--THEN THAT WORD WOULD DEFINITELY BE:

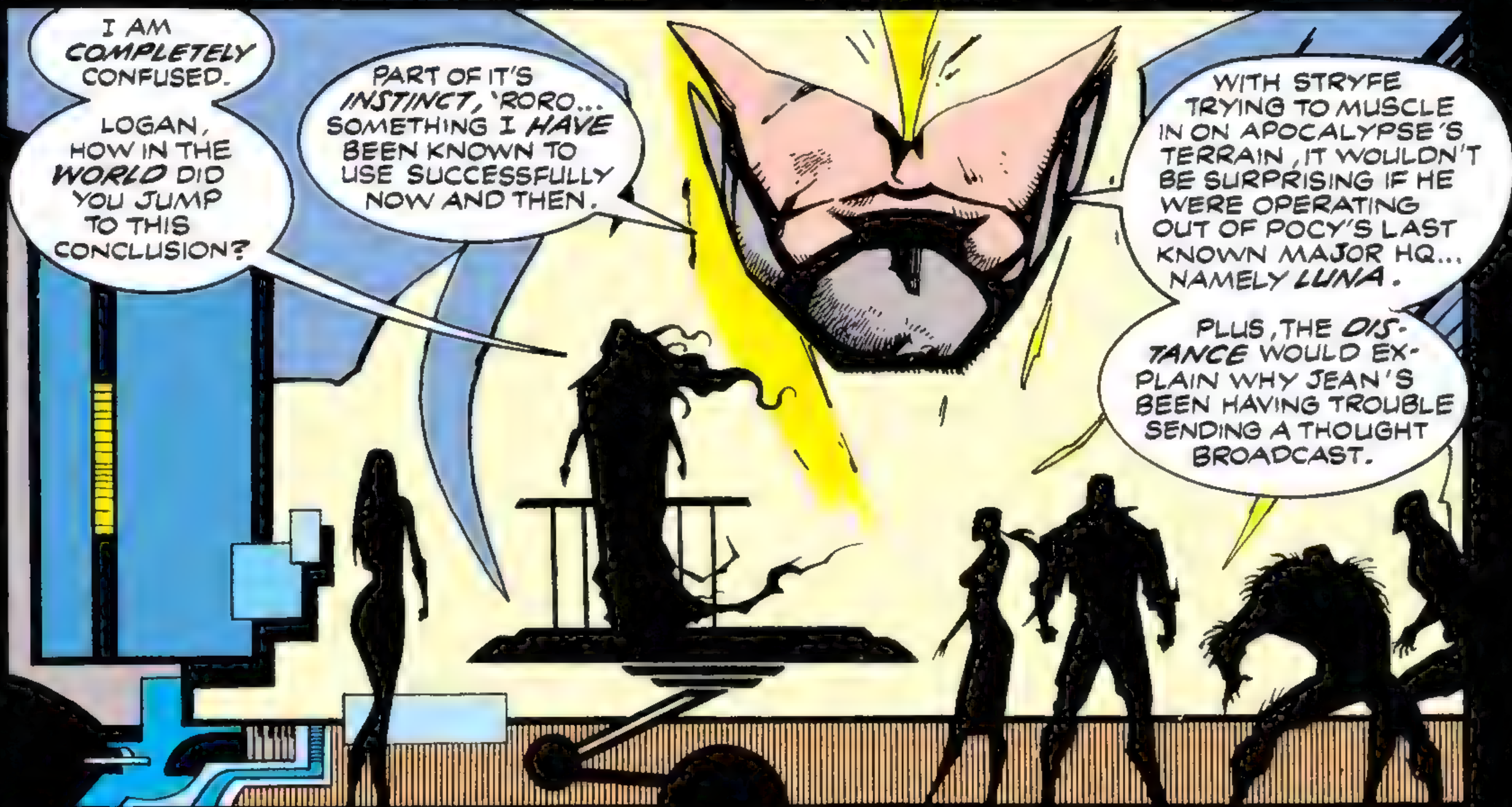
CONFUSED.

THEY'RE ON THE MOON!

I'M TELLING YOU, I'M POSITIVE. IT'S THE ONLY THING THAT MAKES SENSE.

WELL, OF COURSE. THEY COULD BE ANYWHERE, SO NATURALLY THEY'RE ON A SPHERE OF AIRLESS ROCK. MAKES PERFECT SENSE, LOGAN, YOU'RE RIGHT.





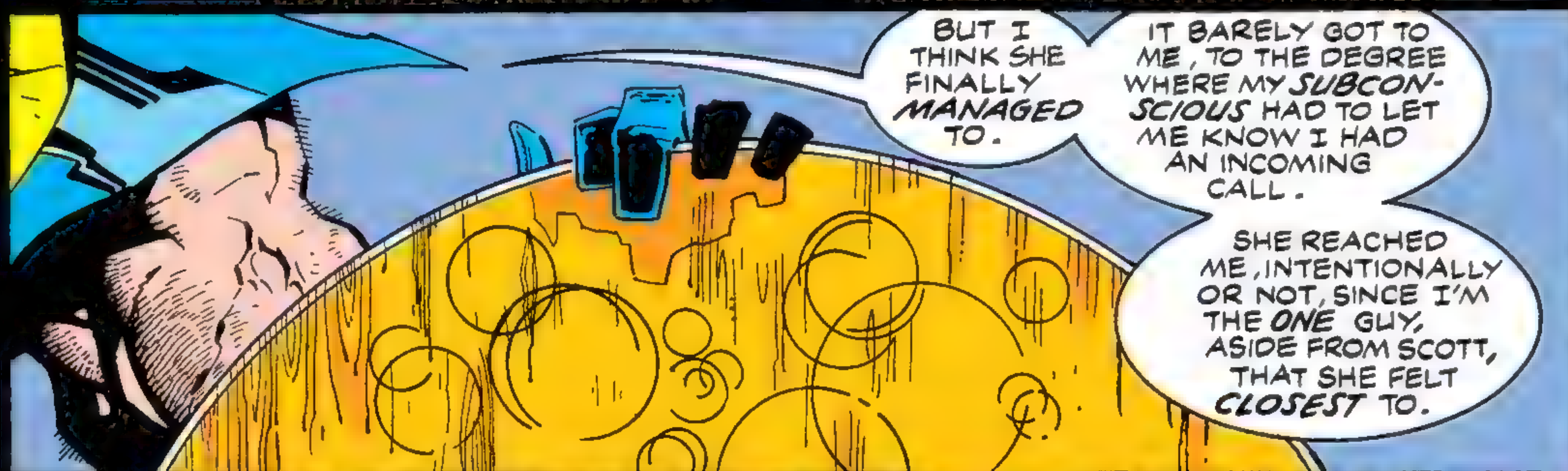
I AM COMPLETELY CONFUSED.

LOGAN, HOW IN THE WORLD DID YOU JUMP TO THIS CONCLUSION?

PART OF IT'S INSTINCT, 'RORO... SOMETHING I HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO USE SUCCESSFULLY NOW AND THEN.

WITH STRYFE TRYING TO MUSCLE IN ON APOCALYPSE'S TERRAIN, IT WOULDN'T BE SURPRISING IF HE WERE OPERATING OUT OF POXY'S LAST KNOWN MAJOR HQ... NAMELY LUNA.

PLUS, THE DISTANCE WOULD EXPLAIN WHY JEAN'S BEEN HAVING TROUBLE SENDING A THOUGHT BROADCAST.



BUT I THINK SHE FINALLY MANAGED TO.

IT BARELY GOT TO ME, TO THE DEGREE WHERE MY SUBCONSCIOUS HAD TO LET ME KNOW I HAD AN INCOMING CALL.

SHE REACHED ME, INTENTIONALLY OR NOT, SINCE I'M THE ONE GUY, ASIDE FROM SCOTT, THAT SHE FELT CLOSEST TO.



AND JUST HOW CLOSE...

...IS "CLOSE"?



NEVER MIND THAT NOW.

WOLVERINE... ARE YOU PICKING UP ANYTHING ELSE THAT COULD POSSIBLY BE INTERPRETED AS A TELEPATHIC CALL FROM JEAN...

...CONSCIOUSLY, UNCONSCIOUSLY, OR OTHERWISE.

NO.

WHICH MIGHT MEAN NOTHING...

...OR EVERYTHING.

"THE WAY I SEE IT, THERE'S TWO POSSIBLE SCENARIOS. EITHER JEAN CAME TO, SENT A CRY FOR HELP, AND THEN PASSED OUT...

"...OR ELSE...AND THIS IS THE SCARIER ONE...

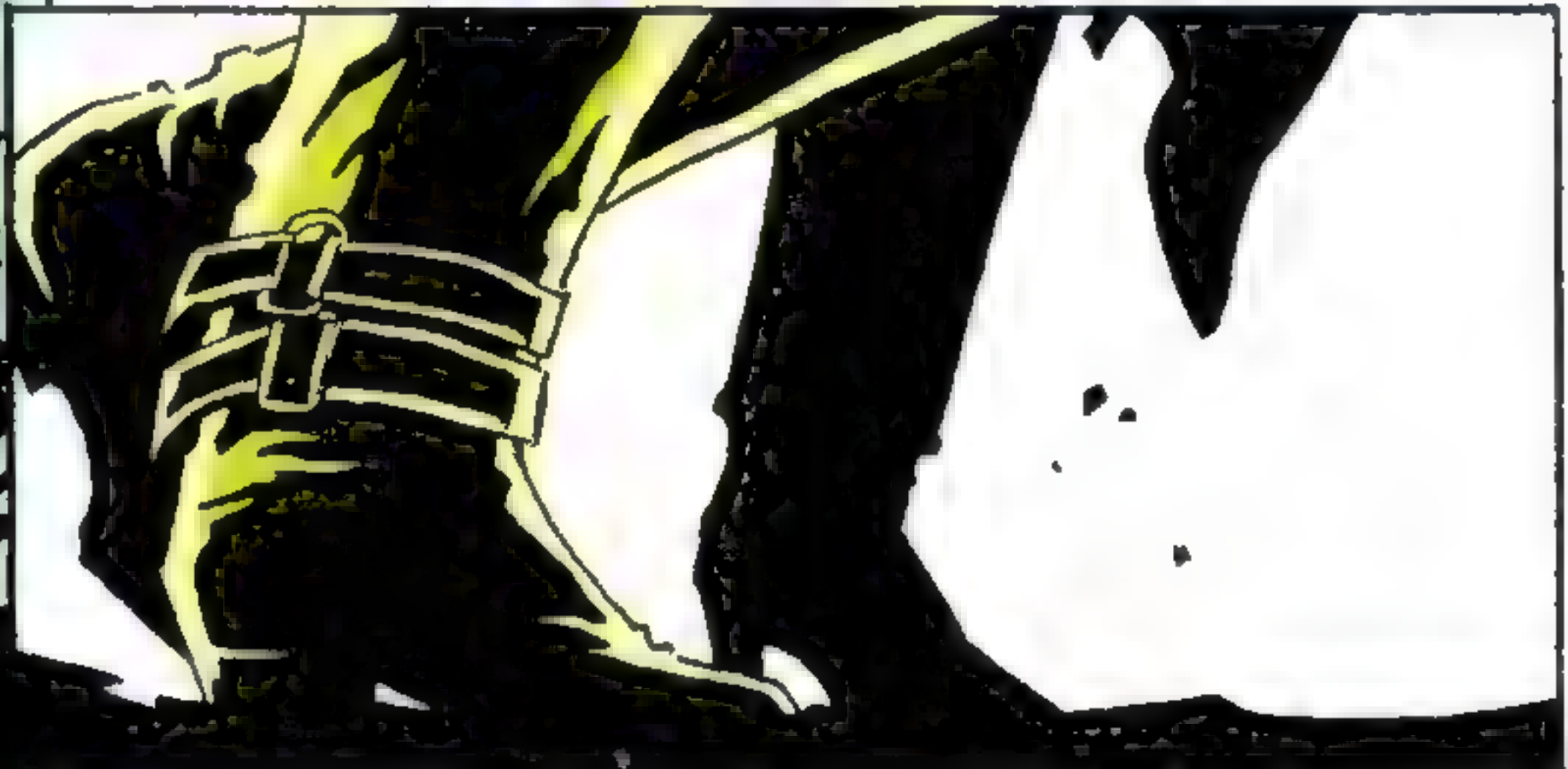
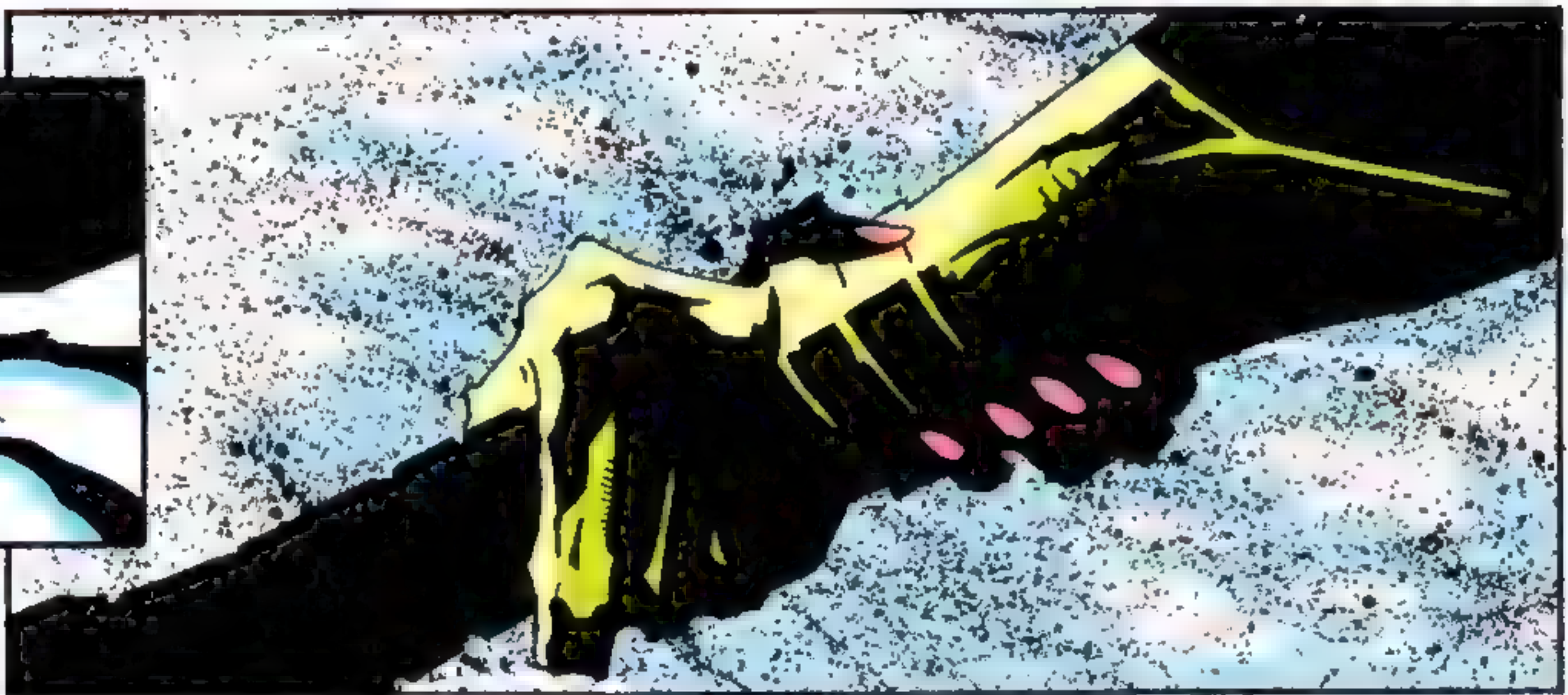
"...JEAN AND SCOTT BROKE OUT OF THE HQ, NOT REALIZING WHERE THEY WERE..."

"...AND JEAN'S BROADCAST WAS A FEAR-BOOSTED SCREAM..."

"...BECAUSE THEY'RE OUT ON THE MOON'S SURFACE FREEZING TO DEATH, AND SUFFOCATING."

"AND IF THAT'S THE CASE..."

"...WE'LL NEVER REACH 'EM IN TIME."





HUNNHH!

AIR!
WE'VE
GOT...

AHUKKH!
AHUKKH!



SLOW,
JEAN!
SLUH...

SLOW...
STEADY
BREATHS...



HUNH.

HUNH.

gonna...
be...
sick...



WELL

WELL

WELL.

ISN'T
THIS...

...COZY.

STILL, IF THERE'S **ANY** SHOT AT ALL, WE GOTTA TAKE IT.

BISHOP, CABLE AND I ARE GOIN' TO HEAD TO THE MOON TO RESCUE SC--

FORGET IT.

I'M NOT WALKING INTO THE LION'S DEN.

I'M INTERESTED IN CONFRONTING **STRYFE**, NOT RISK HAVING TO FIGHT MY WAY OUT OF AN X-STRONGHOLD.

YOU WILL DO NO SUCH THING.

I DO **NOT** WANT YOU HURLING YOURSELVES INTO WHATEVER DANGER AWAITS WITHOUT KNOWING THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

INSTEAD OF HAVING YOU AS AN ASSET, WE MIGHT HAVE TO RESCUE **YOU** AS WELL.

I WANT THE THREE OF YOU TO COME **HERE**, VIA WHATEVER TRANSPORT MEANS THAT CABLE HAS.

AND IF YOU TWO TRY TO FORCE ME TO GO, THEN **SOMEONE'S** GOING TO GET **HURT**...

LIKE WHO?

LIKE ME, PROBABLY.

BUT **THAT** WON'T ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING. YOU NEED ME COOPERATIVE, NOT COMATOSE.

MAN MAKES SENSE. WE GOT A STANDOFF HERE, STORM...

...LESS YOU WANT US TO TRY AND STRONG-ARM HIM - YOUR CALL.

VERY WELL, WOLVERINE. DO AS HE SAYS WE WILL ARRANGE OUR **OWN** MODE OF TRANSPORTATION.

MANSION OUT.

GOOD THING SHE PASSED ON YOUR OFFER TO HEAD STRAIGHT TO THE MOON.

BODYSLIDING THERE ISN'T THE SAME AS BODYSLIDING TO EARTH.

THERE'S DIFFERENT GRAVIMETRIC FIELDS INVOLVED.

NOT TO MENTION PLANETARY--



HOLD IT.
YOU TELLING ME WE CAN'T GET THERE?

NO, WE CAN. BUT SERIOUS ADJUSTMENTS HAVE TO BE MADE. THIS ISN'T "STAR TREK," YOU KNOW.

IF I'M BODYSLIDING TO A DIFFERENT PLANETARY MASS, I HAVE TO RECALIBRATE MY INSTRUMENTATION.



HOW LONG WILL THAT TAKE?

IF I DO IT MYSELF, ABOUT TWENTY, TWENTY FIVE MINUTES.



AND IF WE HELP?

AN HOUR AND A HALF.



YOU WOULDN'T HAPPEN TO HAVE SOME BEER AND A DECK OF CARDS AROUND HERE, WOULD YOU?



YOU REALIZE THIS IS PRETTY FAR-FETCHED, DON'T YOU?

OF COURSE.

THE ODDS ON THIS PANNING OUT ARE SLIM.

OF COURSE.

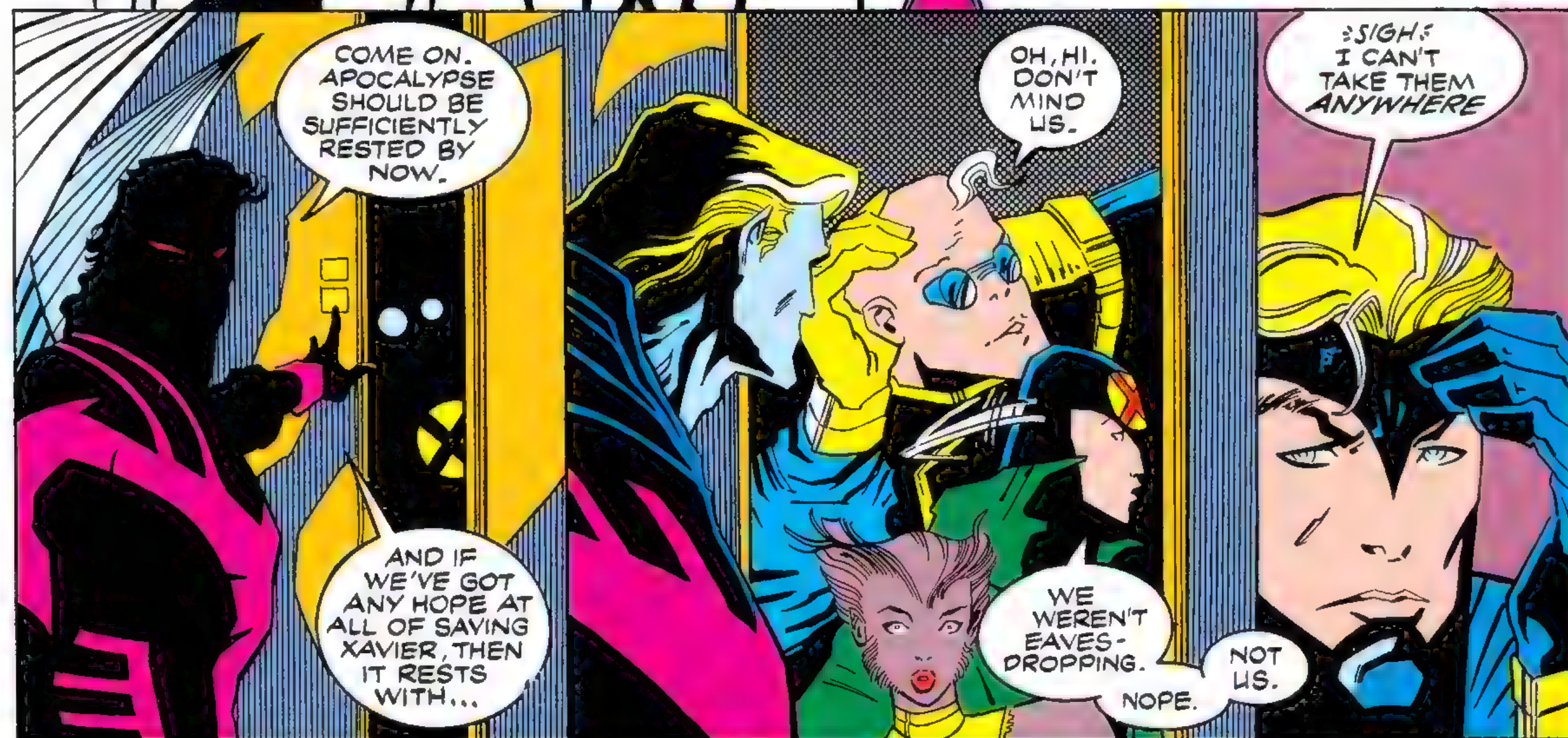
WE'RE GOING TO DO IT ANYWAY, AREN'T WE?

OF COURSE.

YEAH, I FIGURED.

ANY THOUGHTS ON THE STRIKE TEAM?

OF COURSE.





WONDERING HOW YOU CAN HEAR ME?

SIMPLE. I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF IMPLANTING SUBCUTANEOUS TRANSMITTERS JUST BEHIND YOUR JAWS.

YOU'RE SO PREDICTABLE, YOU SEE.

DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND THAT YOU'RE LIKE MICE RUNNING THROUGH A MAZE?

ANY STRATEGY YOU DEVELOP HAS ALREADY BEEN ANTICIPATED AND COUNTERED.

OH, AND CYCLOPS... I WOULDN'T BOTHER WITH AN OPTIC BLAST IF I WERE YOU. IT WILL JUST RICOCHET AROUND IN THERE. IT WON'T HURT *YOU*, OF COURSE...

...BUT IT MIGHT SERIOUSLY DAMAGE YOUR COMPANION.

DON'T BOTHER ASKING HIM, JEAN. HIS KIND DOESN'T NEED RHYME OR REASON BEYOND THEIR OWN MEGALOMANIA.

"HIS KIND?" UP ON ALL THE LATEST "SUPER-VILLAIN PSYCHOLOGY" ARE WE?

YOU'RE SO SECURE, CYCLOPS. ALWAYS KNOWING THAT YOU'RE IN THE RIGHT. THAT, IN YOUR PURITY, YOU COULD NEVER HAVE DONE ANYTHING TO BRING THIS ON YOURSELF.

WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM US ALREADY?

WHAT'S THE PURPOSE OF THIS SICK EXERCISE? REVENGE? BUT WHY *US* PARTICULARLY?

YOU'RE ALL INNOCENCE, AREN'T YOU?

SELF-RIGHTEOUS FOOL! YOU DESTROY INNOCENCE!

SCOTT... THERE'S... THERE'S SOMETHING MORE HERE... SOMETHING GOING ON... SOME...

...HUNH... GETTING... HARD TO BREATHE...

YOU'RE RUNNING OUT OF AIR. THERE'S ONLY SO MUCH IN THAT FORCEFIELD, AFTER ALL.

AND I ALWAYS DO THE LEAST I CAN DO. IN THAT RESPECT...

...I TAKE AFTER YOU.

BUT I'LL TELL YOU WHAT, CYCLOPS. I'LL OFFER YOU A CHANCE. IT IS, AFTER ALL, THE LEAST I CAN DO.



ALL RESTED UP,
APOCALYPSE?

YOUR
CONCERN
IS *MOST*
KIND.

MY
CONCERN
IS SELF-
SERVING.

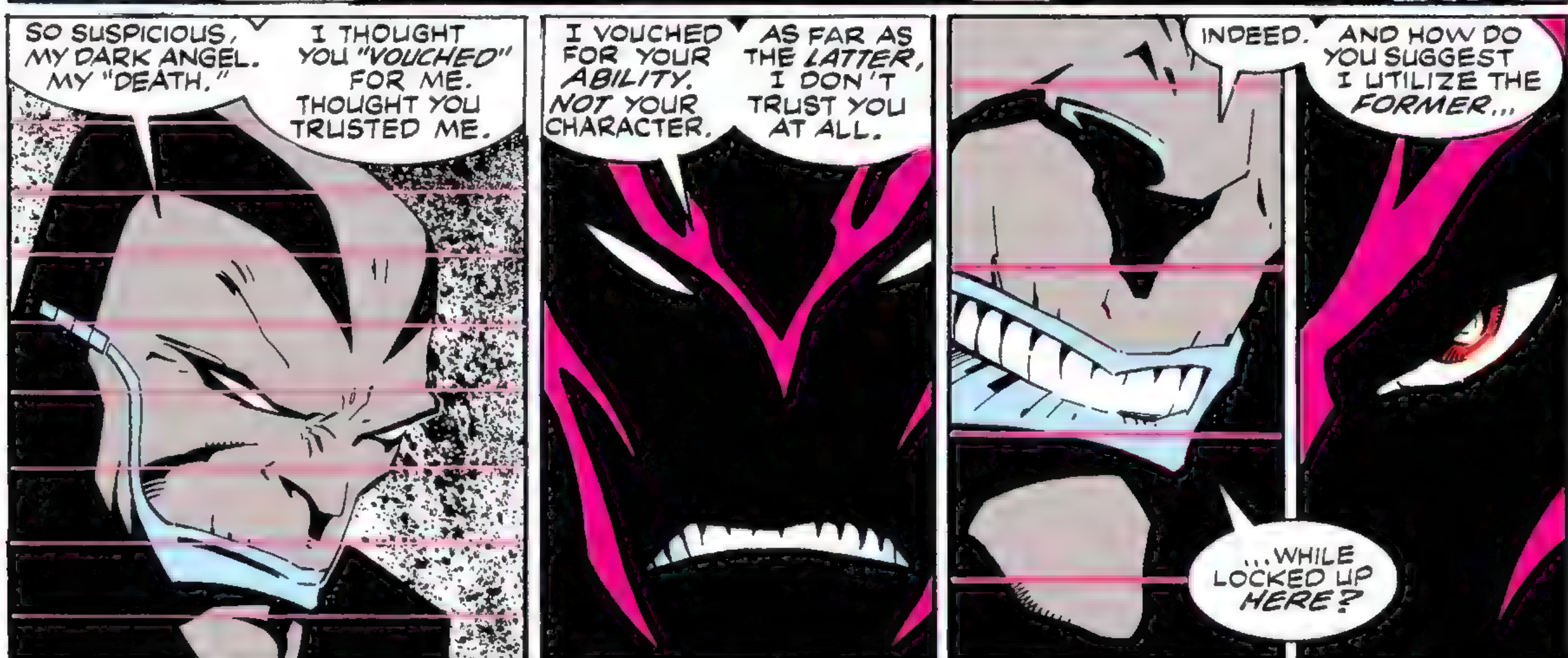
THESE
PEOPLE ARE
TAKING MY WORD
FOR IT THAT
YOU CAN HELP
CHARLES
XAVIER.

IF SOMETHING
GOES WRONG, I
DON'T WANT YOU SAY-
ING THAT YOUR BATTLE
WITH STRYFE LEFT
YOU INCAPABLE OF
DOING WHAT YOU
SAID YOU CAN DO.



HAVEN'T YOU
REALIZED YET,
"SON?"

DOUBTLESSLY
ONE OF THE
REASONS STRYFE
SOUGHT TO KILL
ME WAS HIS
KNOWLEDGE THAT
I *COULD* UNDO
THE TECHNO-
VIRUS.



SO SUSPICIOUS,
MY DARK ANGEL.
MY "DEATH."

I THOUGHT
YOU "VOUCHED"
FOR ME.
THOUGHT YOU
TRUSTED ME.

I VOUCHED
FOR YOUR
ABILITY.
NOT YOUR
CHARACTER.

AS FAR AS
THE LATTER,
I DON'T
TRUST YOU
AT ALL.

INDEED.

AND HOW DO
YOU SUGGEST
I UTILIZE THE
FORMER...

...WHILE
LOCKED UP
HERE?

EVERYONE
ELSE STAND
BACK A WAYS.

IF HE
TRIES
ANYTHING,
THE FIRST...

...AND
LAST...

...THING HE
ENCOUNTERS
WILL BE ME.

THREATS.
CONSIDER
ME *DULY*
INTIMIDATED.

JUST KEEP
MOVING...

..."FATHER."

YO.
ALEX.

C'MERE
A SEC.

I THOUGHT YOU SHOULD
KNOW... I'VE LOST MENTAL
CONTACT WITH MY DUPLICATE
THAT WAS BABYSITTING THE
X-PATRIOTS AT THE
HOSPITAL.

OH, THAT'S
JUST *GREAT*.
IS HE *OKAY*,
JAMIE?

YEAH, IF HE'D BEEN
KILLED, I'D *KNOW*.
HE MAY HAVE JUST
FALLEN ASLEEP..

OR BEEN KNOCKED
OUT. WELL, THERE'S
NOTHING I CAN DO
ABOUT IT *NOW*. THERE'S
ONLY SO MANY *FRONTS*
WE CAN *HANDLE*.

LOOK, IF THE X-PATRIOTS
HAVE BOLTED, THEN HAVE
YOUR DUPE MAKE DUPES
AND START COMBING THE
CITY... SOON AS HE COMES TO.

MAN, VAL'S
GOING TO GO
BALLISTIC
WHEN SHE
FINDS OUT.

AND SHE'S
ALREADY
STRUNG
OUT--

SO DO
HER A FAVOR,
DON'T *TELL*
HER.

ALEX,
WHAT'S
GOING *ON*?
IS THERE A
PROBLEM?

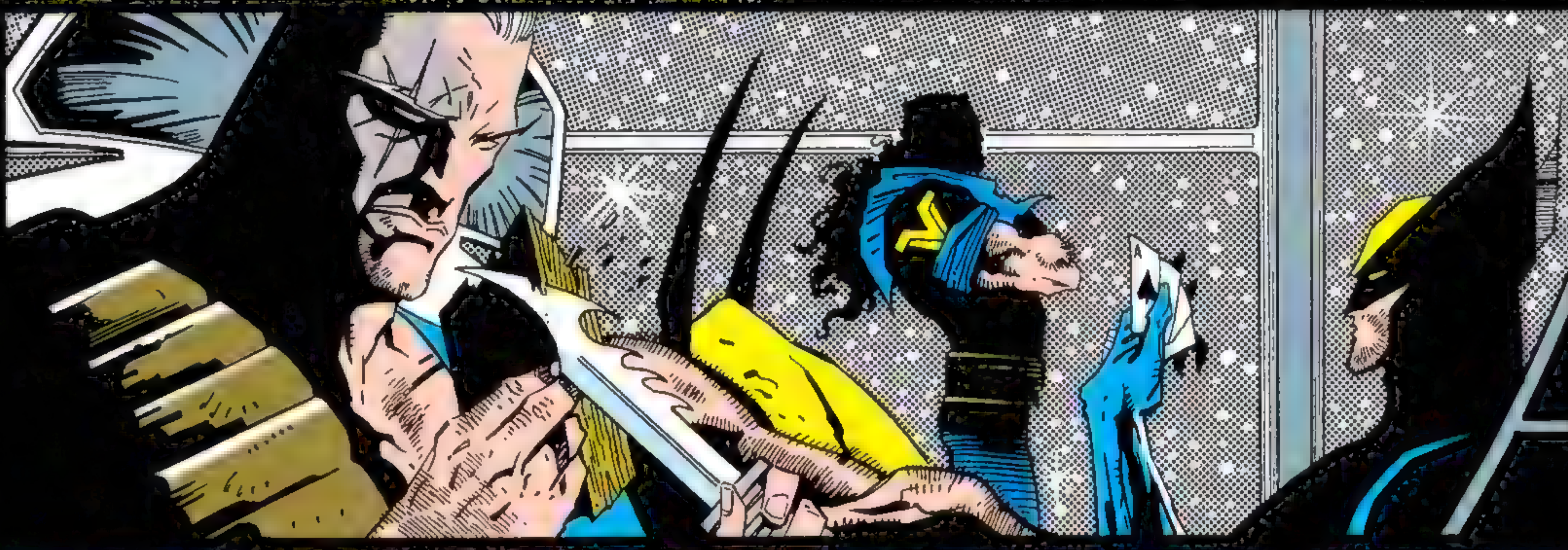
LIHH...

I HAVE
TO. HOW
CAN I
NOT--?

NO.
NO PROBLEM,
VAL. NO
PROBLEM
AT ALL.



GREYMALKIN...



AND, BACK AT
THE MANSION...



WELL,
ARE YE
GOING TO
JUST **STAND**
THERE AND LOOK
MENACING?
OR ARE YE
GOING TO
HELP HIM?

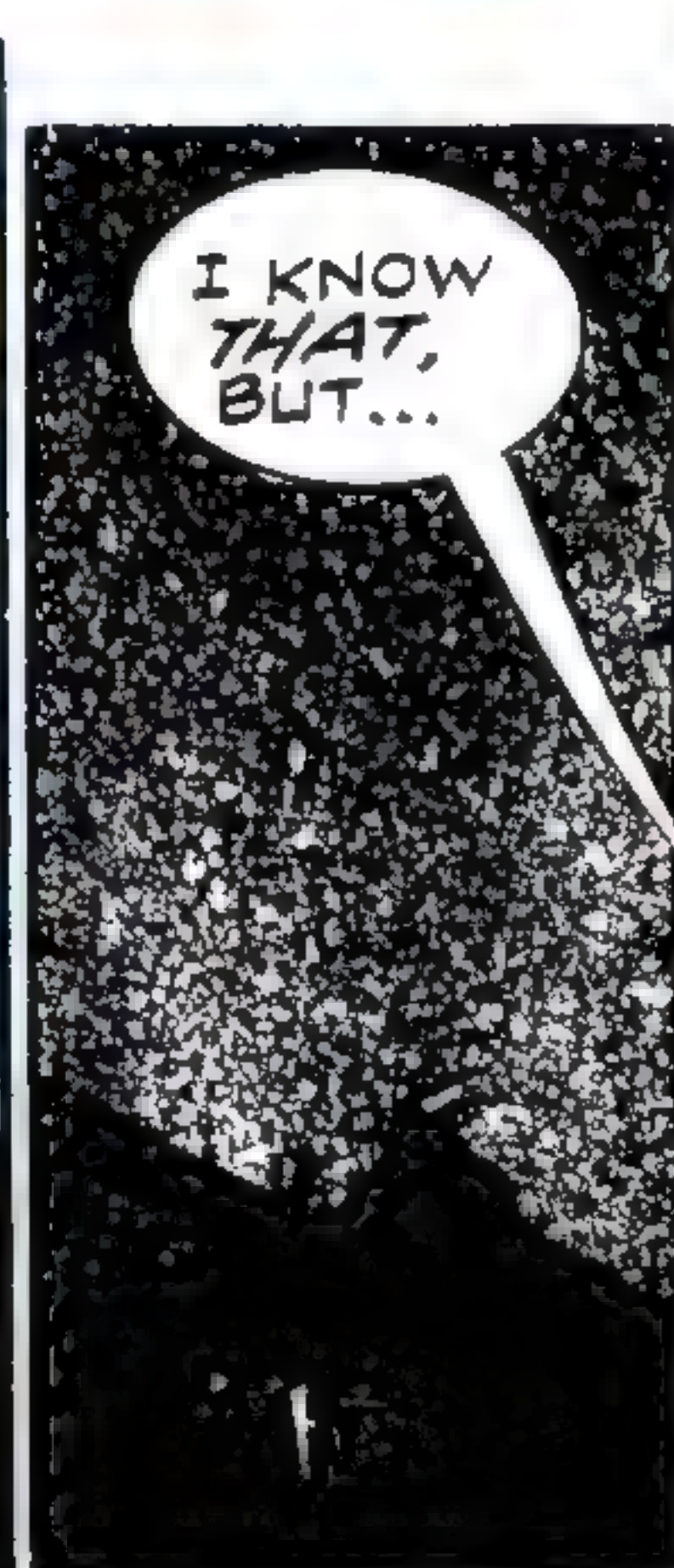
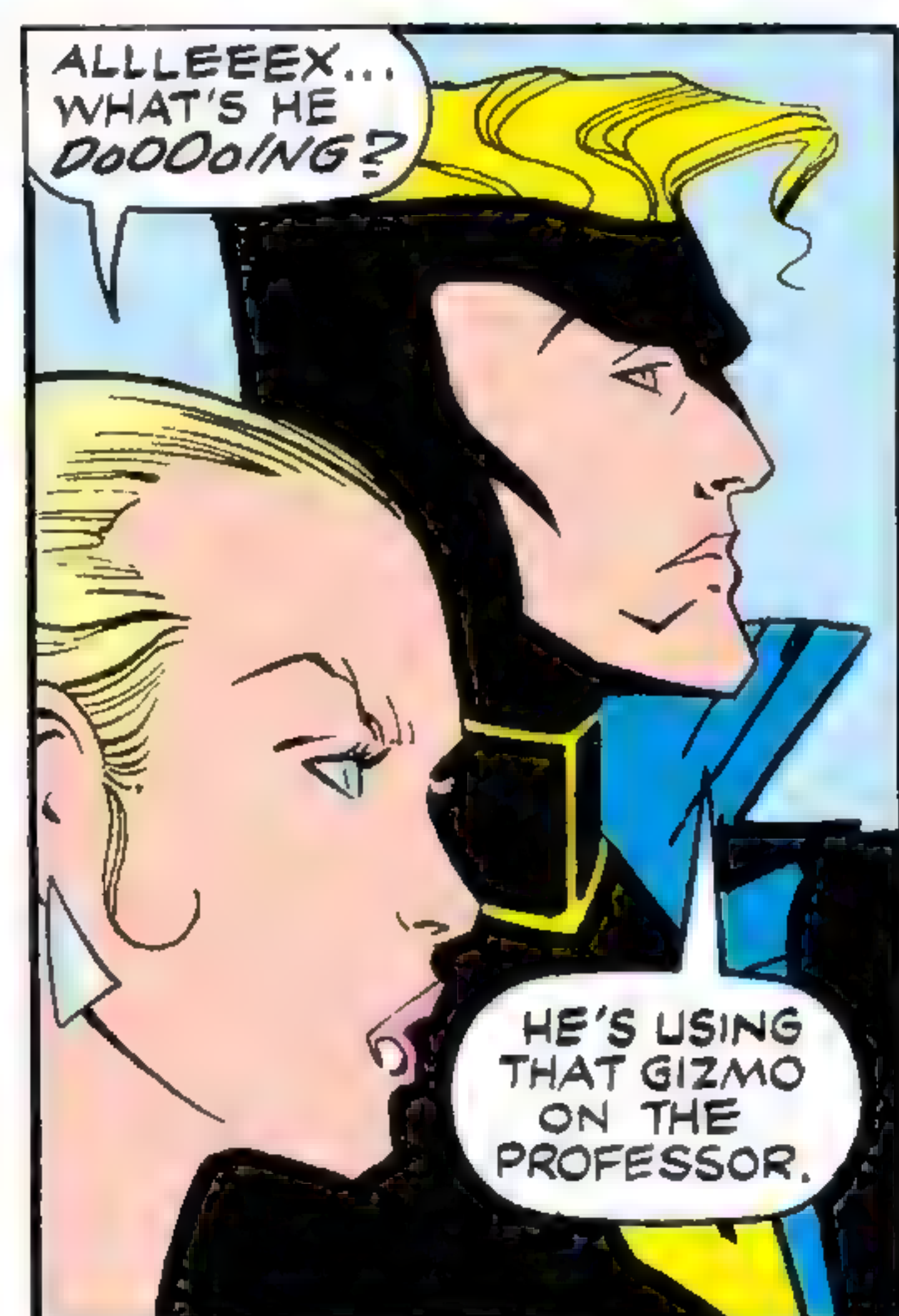
MERELY
PLANNING MY
STRATEGY,
WOMAN. YOU
WOULD NOT WANT
ME TO RUSH **INTO**
THIS WITHOUT
SUFFICIENT MENTAL
PREPARATION.

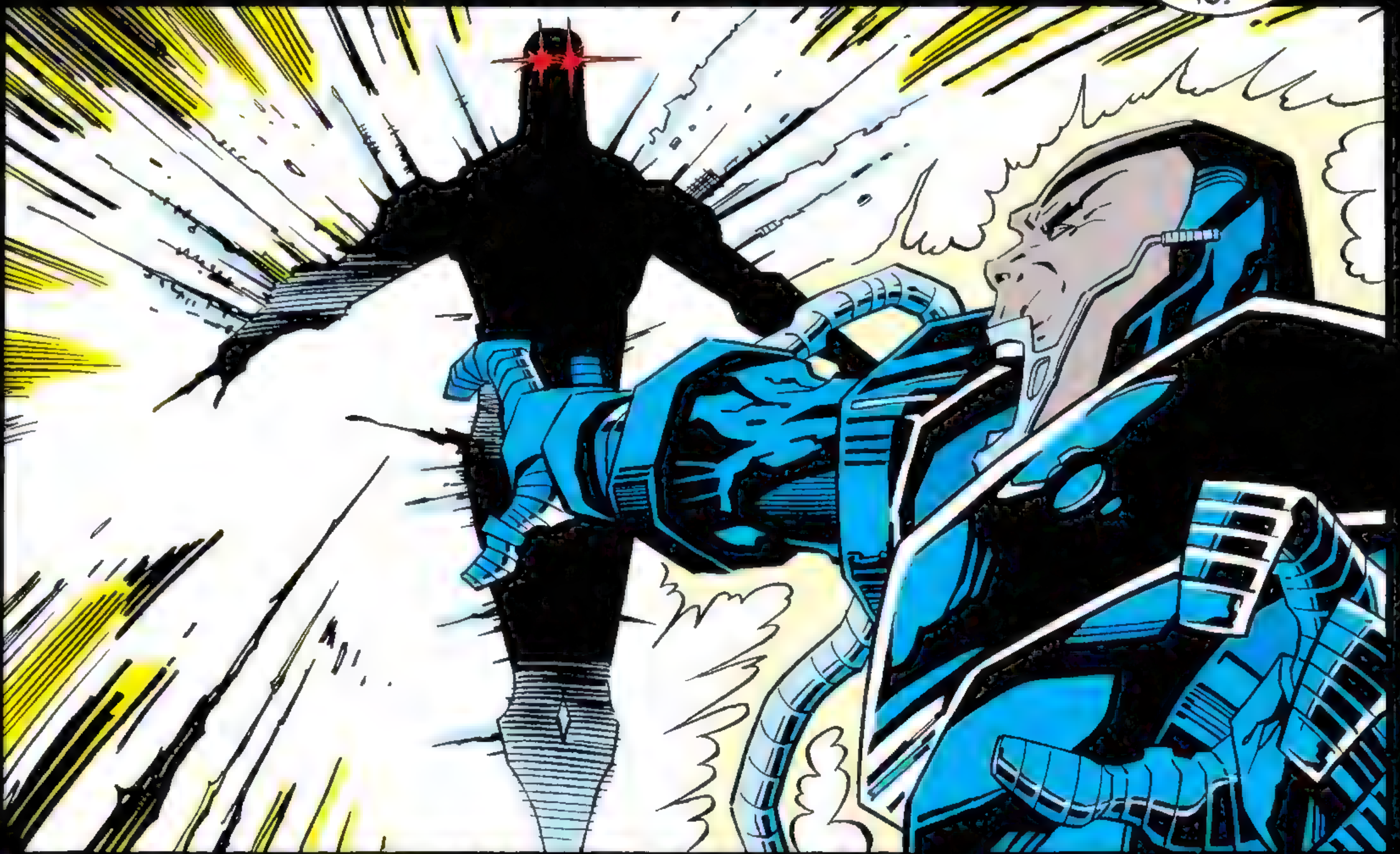
YOU WOULD
NOT CARE ABOUT
THE COST TO **ME**,
OF COURSE. BUT IT
WOULD HAVE FATAL
CONSEQUENCES
FOR XAVIER.

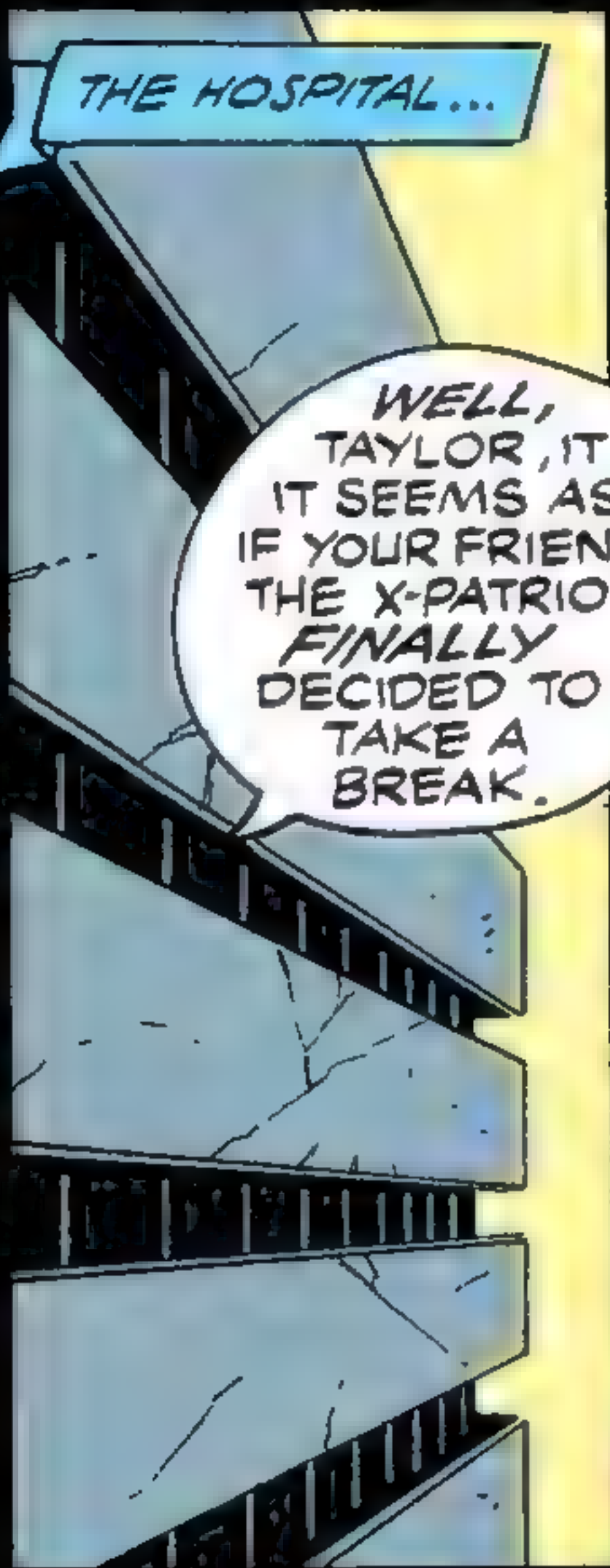
I SAY
WE WATCH
HIM LIKE A
HAWK.



ALEX,
I DO
EVERYTHING
LIKE A
HAWK.







THE HOSPITAL...

WELL, TAYLOR, IT SEEMS AS IF YOUR FRIENDS, THE X-PATRIOTS, FINALLY DECIDED TO TAKE A BREAK.



GOOD. I WAS BENDING THE RULES FOR THEM, BUT FRANKLY, HAVING SO MANY VISITORS WAS...

TAYLOR?



WAIT A MINUTE! WHO ARE YOU?!

UHHH...



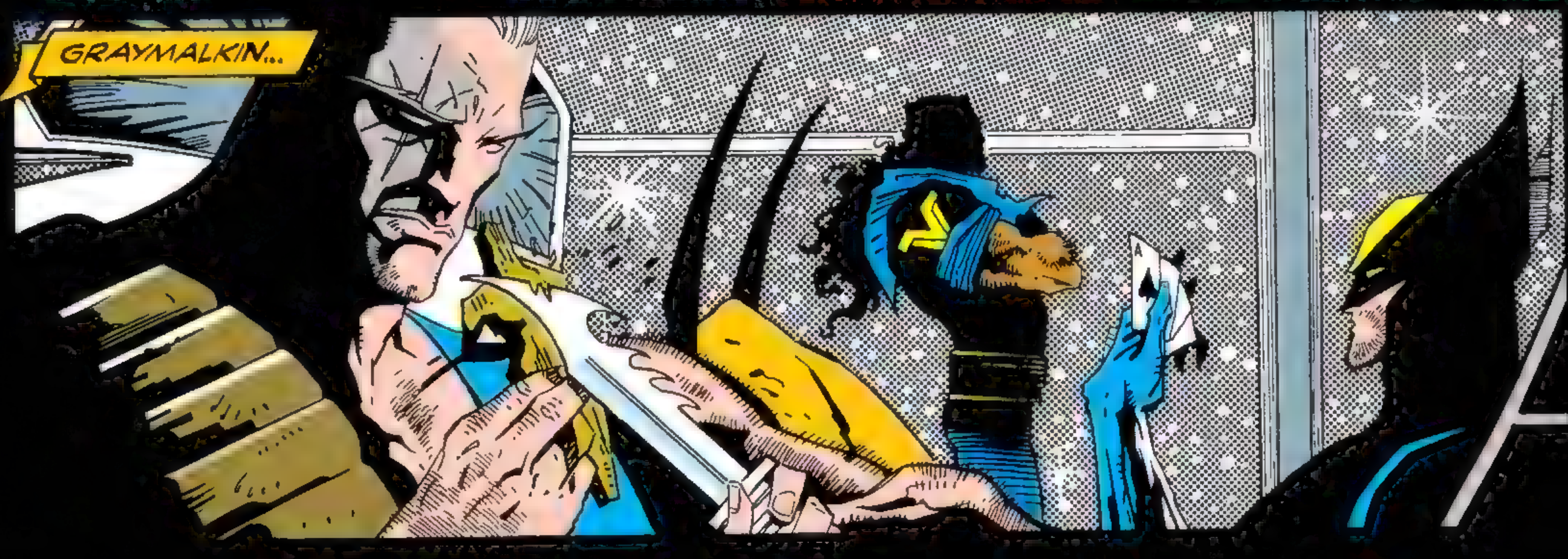
I SAID WHO ARE YOU?!

MUH... MULTIPLE MAN... I THINK...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? WHERE'S MY PATIENT? AND WHAT KIND OF NAME IS MULTIPLE...



...MAN?



GRAYMALKIN...

THE MAN IN
THE MOON...

ALL YOU
HAVE TO
DO TO SAVE
YOUR LIVES...
IS **BEG** ME.

I WANT
YOU TO **BEG**
WITH **TEARS**
STREAMING DOWN
YOUR FACES. THE
WAY THAT A
CHILD WOULD
PLEAD WITH HIS
PARENT.

THE WAY
THAT SOMEONE
WITH **NO HOPE**, WITH
NO SOURCE OF LOVE
WOULD IMPORE SOME-
ONE WHO IS THAT
PERSON'S **LAST**
PRAYER.

SAY THAT
YOU WANT AND
NEED ME. SAY THAT
THERE'S NO ONE IN
YOUR LIFE MORE
IMPORTANT TO
YOU RIGHT NOW
THAN **ME**.

GO
ON.

IT'S
YOUR
ONLY
HOPE.

NEVER.

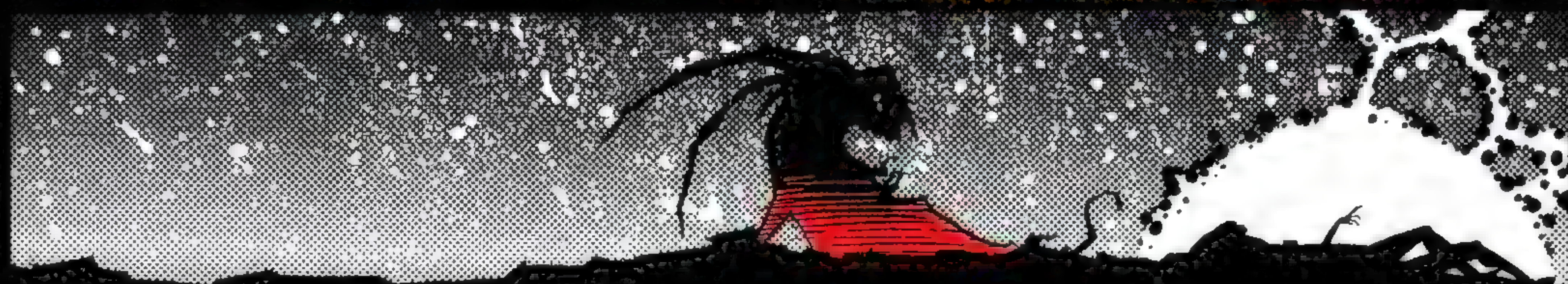
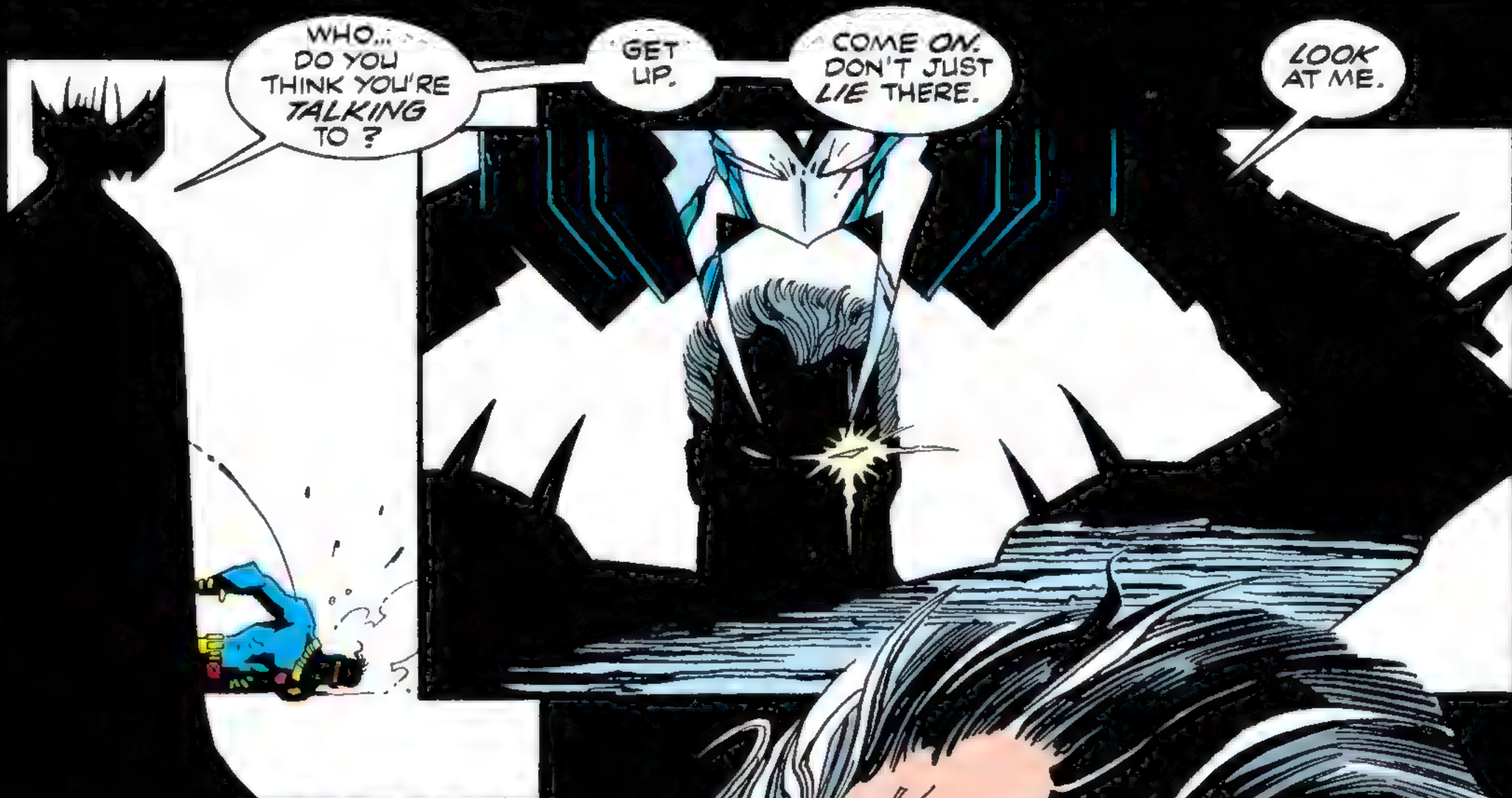
WE DON'T
TRUST YOU.
WE DON'T
WANT YOUR
HELP.

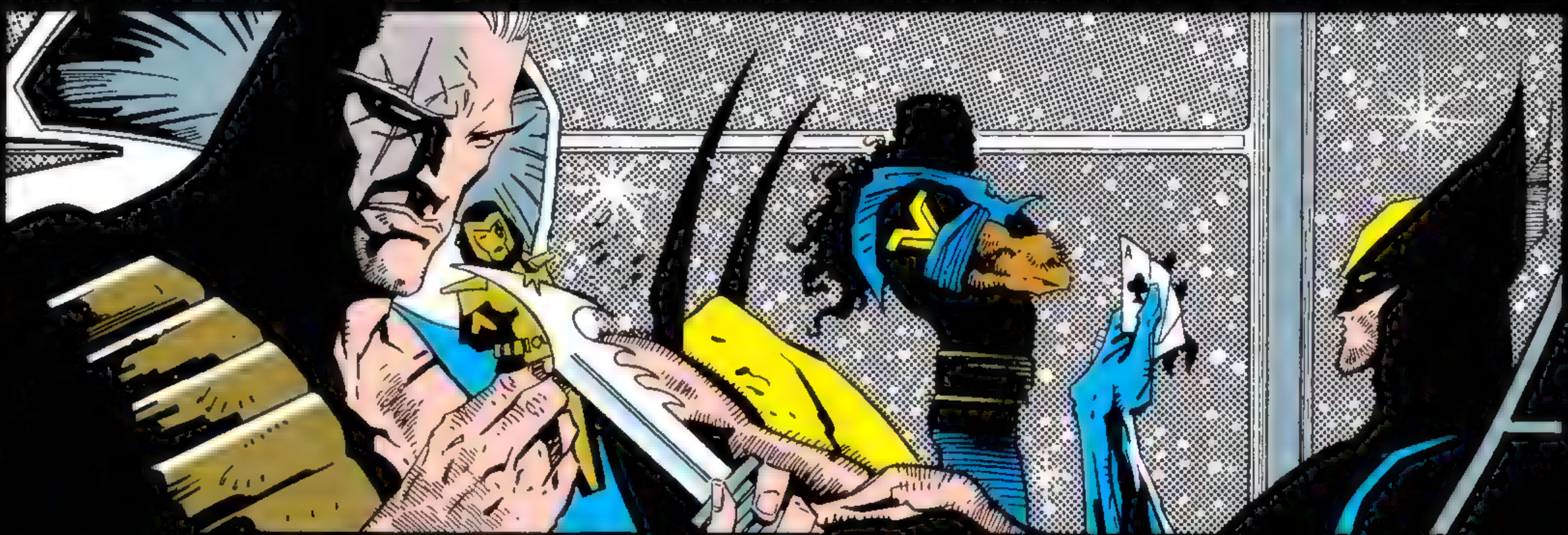
WE...WE'D
RATHER
DIE...

...then
throw
ourselves...

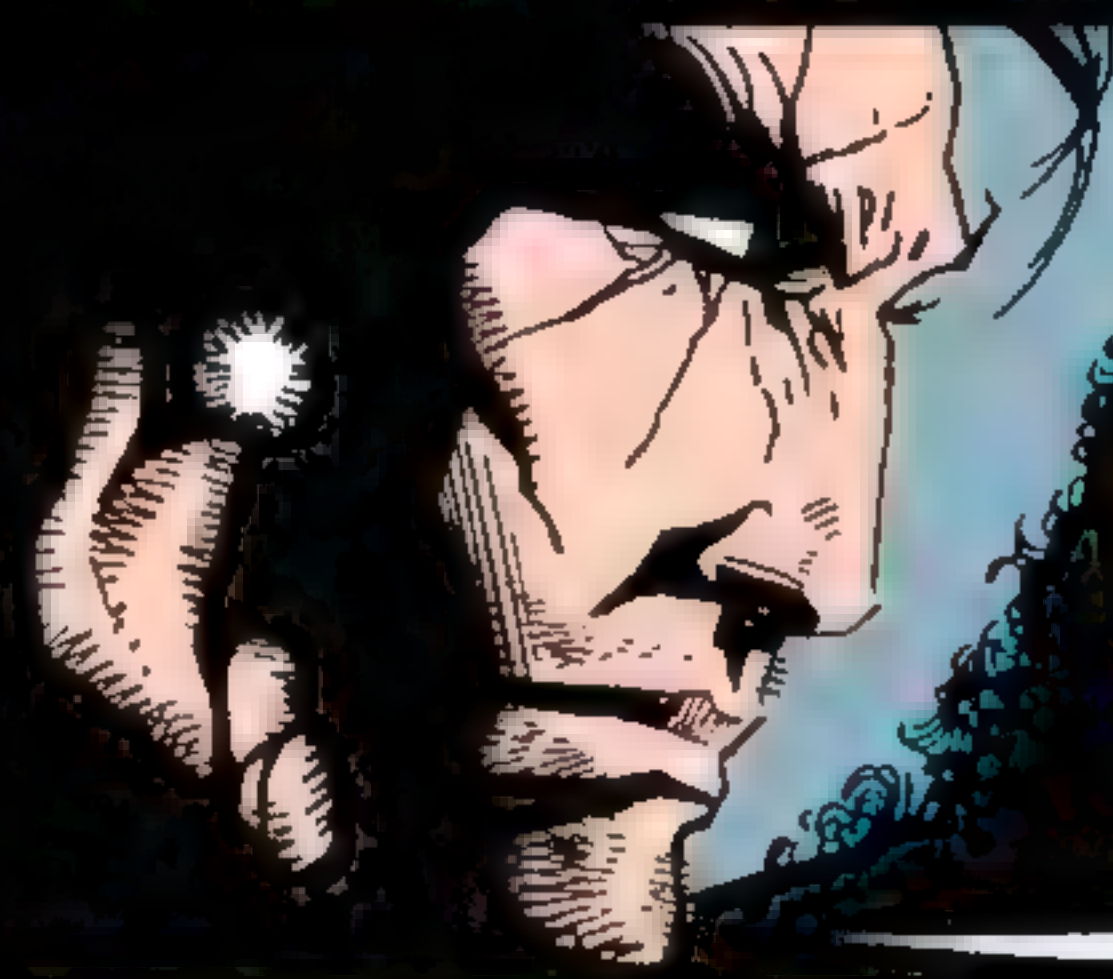
...on the...on
the mercy of...

...someone
like... **YOU**...





I'M
BORED.



ME
TOO.

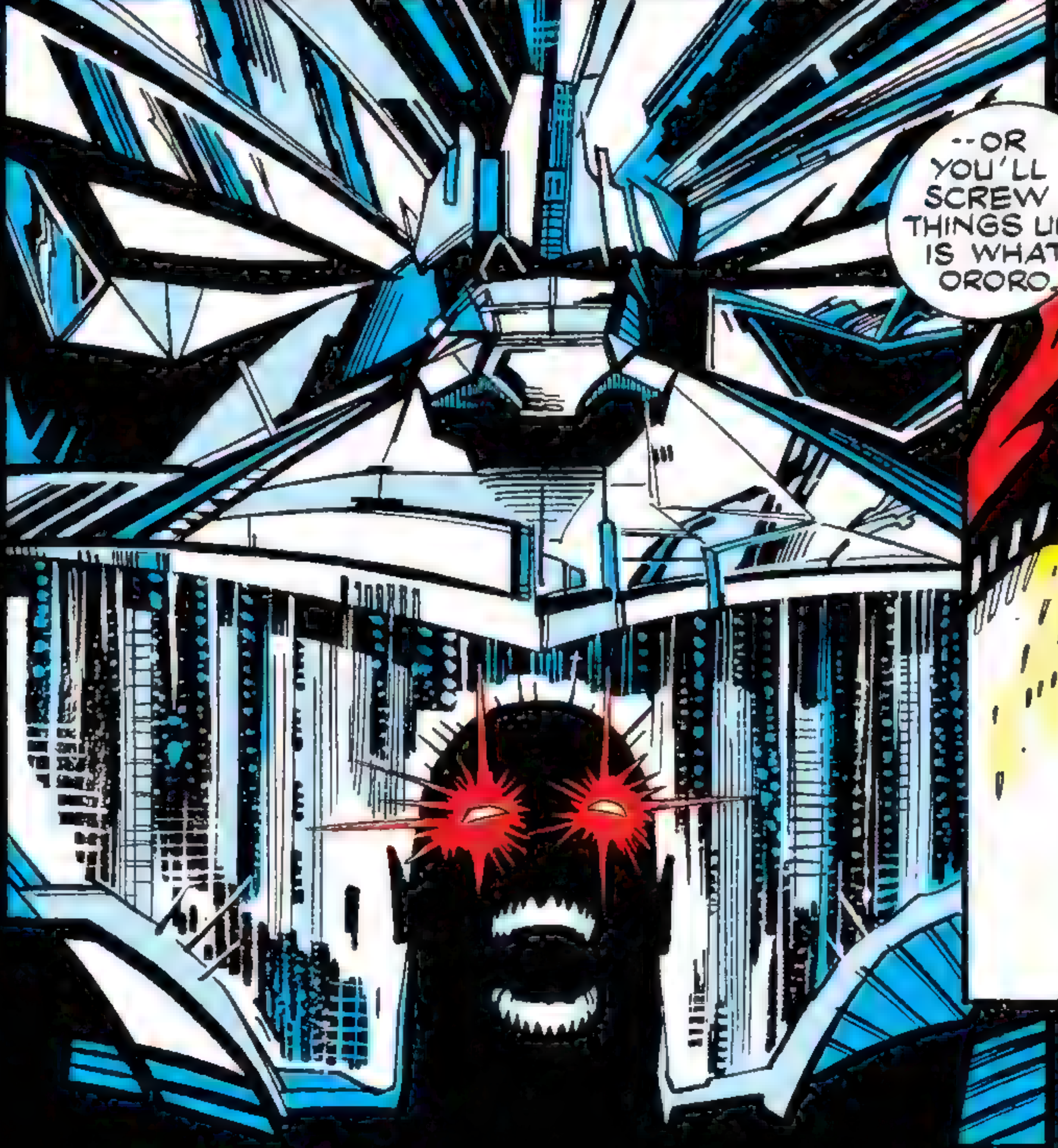
LET'S
GO.

WE'RE
GONE.



THEY'RE
GONE!
XAVIER AND
APOCALYPSE!
THE VIRUS
SWALLOWED
THEM BOTH!

WARREN--
YOU HAVE
TWO SECONDS
TO MOVE,
OR--



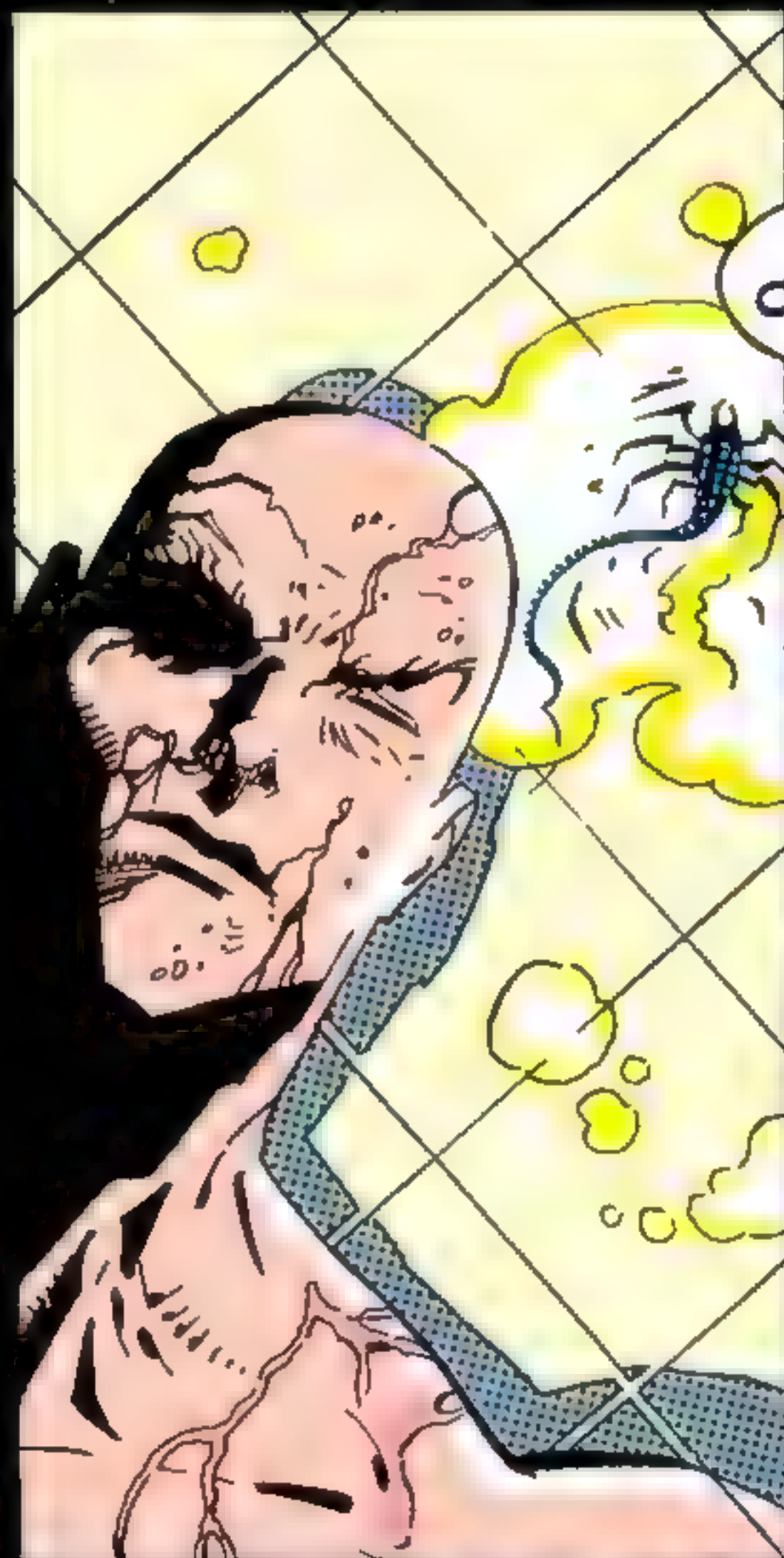
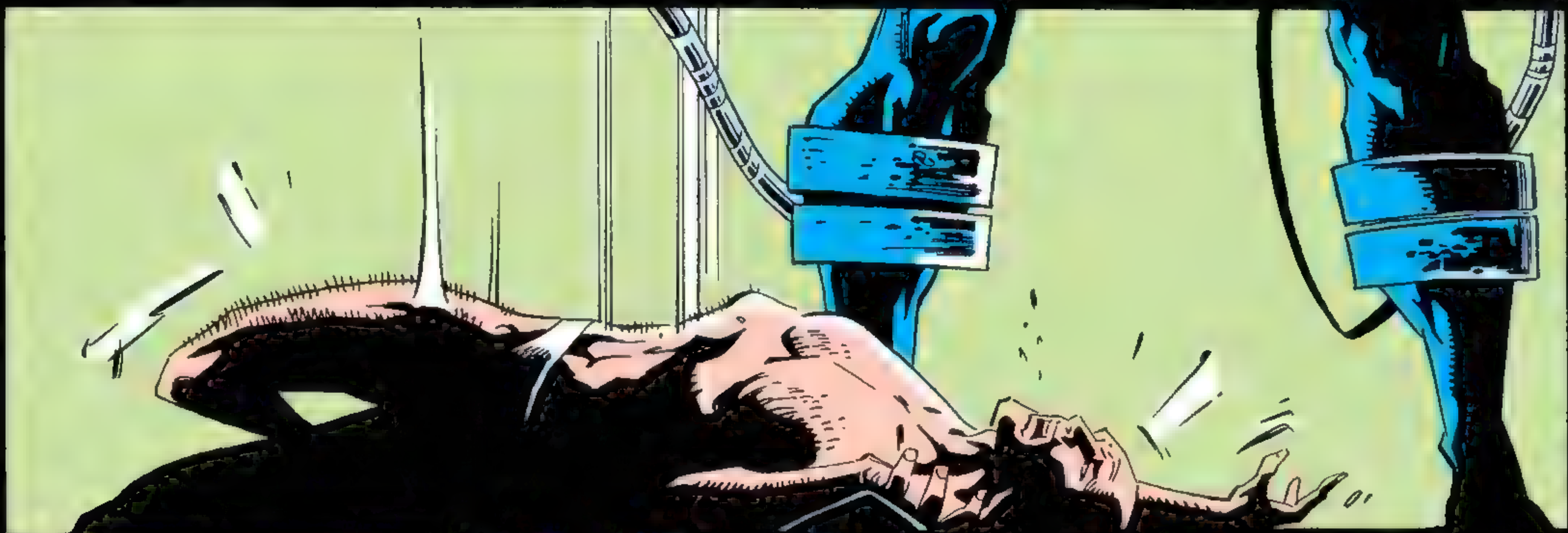
--OR
YOU'LL
SCREW
THINGS UP
IS WHAT,
ORORO.

NO
OFFENSE.

WATCH.



WATCH
WHAT? I
CAN'T SEE
ANYTHING!



THE OPERATION...

...IS OVER.

KRUNCH

IN CASE YOU'RE *CURIOUS*... I ACCELERATED THE VIRUS'S GROWTH BEYOND THE POINT WHERE IT COULD REPLICATE ITSELF *PROPERLY*.

IT FEEDS ON BIOLOGICAL MATTER, AND I STIMULATED IT SO *RADICALLY* THAT XAVIER BECAME *INSUFFICIENT* TO SUSTAIN IT.

SO IT SOUGHT OUT *ADDITIONAL* NOURISHMENT, AND FOUND ME TO BE SOMEWHAT... *UNPALATABLE*.



AS DO WE ALL.

YOU *COULD* HAVE TOLD US YOU WERE PLANNING TO DESTROY IT WITH *TERMINAL* INDIGESTION.

TRUE, BUT I HAD NO *DESIRE* TO.

LET HIM SLEEP FOR A TIME. HE WILL BE FINE ONCE HE AWAKENS.

APOCALYPSE... *THANK* YOU. YOU HAVE MY... *OUR*... GRATITUDE... IF NOT OUR TRUST. NOW... WE HAVE TO GET TO JEAN AND SCOTT.

THIS IS *NOT* A PROBLEM. I HAVE A VESSEL CAPABLE OF SUCH A JOURNEY.

THEN I AM AGAIN IN YOUR DEBT.

BUT WE HAVE TO GET THERE *QUICKLY*...



"... BECAUSE WOLVERINE AND BISHOP ALONE ARE ALREADY A HOT-HEADED, SELF-CONFIDENT COMBINATION."

"WORKING WITH CABLE, I THINK THEY WILL WANT TO TAKE MATTERS INTO THEIR OWN HANDS BY GOING ON AHEAD TO THE MOON."

ALL RIGHT. I'VE LANDED US IN SOME SORT OF STORAGE FACILITY. SUGGESTIONS, LOGAN?

SUBTLETY. AVOID FIGHTING IF WE CAN. SNEAK IN, FIND CYKE AND JEAN, SNEAK OUT.

IF WE'RE LUCKY, NO ONE WILL EVEN NOTICE US.

UHM... GUYS...

...WE'VE HIT A SNAG.

Next

"THE X-CUTIONER'S SONG" WRAPS UP IN X-FORCE #18. BE THERE FOR THE CATAclySMIC CONCLUSION! THEN BE BACK HERE FOR #87 AS WE REVEAL: GUIDO'S SECRET ORIGIN! POLARIS'S NEW COSTUME! RAHNE'S DEEPEST FANTASIES! A SURPRISING GUEST STAR! THE DEBUT OF NEW ARTIST JOE QUESADA! ALL THIS AND MORE IN THE MOST UNUSUAL ISSUE EVER: **X-AMINATIONS!**



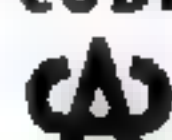
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APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE



AUTHORITY

X-CUTIONER'S SONG

PART 11

X-MEN



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ANDY KUBERT

MARY PENNINGTON

**PROFESSOR XAVIER'S LIFE HAS BEEN SAVED BY THE X-MEN'S ARCH-FOE --
APOCALYPSE!**

**THE RENEGADE X-FORCE TEAM REMAIN PRISONERS
OF A SHATTERED DREAM! CABLE, BISHOP AND
WOLVERINE HAVE UNCOVERED THE LOCATION OF
THE KIDNAPPED CYCLOPS AND JEAN GREY!**

FAR BELOW THE
SURFACE OF
THE MOON...

COURSE OF
ACTION--?

BISHOP, YOU
HAVE THIS GIFT
F'R THE OBVIOUS,
DON'T YOU, BUB?



FOR THESE THREE
HARD-BITTEN MEN
OF WAR, FURTHER
TALK IS UNNECES-
SARY.

THEY KNOW THEY
ARE OUTNUMBERED
AND OVERWHELMED,
BUT THEY KNOW,
TOO, THEY ARE THE
BEST AT WHAT THEY
DO.

THE ARMORED SOLDIERS
OF THE MUTANT LIBERA-
TION FRONT REACT FAR
TOO SLOWLY--

-- AS DO THE GENE-
SPAWNS OF
APOCALYPSE, THE
DARK RIDERS,
WHO NOW SERVE A
NEW MASTER--

-- THE MADMAN-RIPPED-
THROUGH-TIME WHO
ENGINEERED THIS TITANIC
BATTLE... **STRYFE!**

THAT MOMENT'S UN-
CERTAINTY IS ALL
THESE STAR-CROSSED
SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE
NEEDS TO PRESS
THEIR ATTACK--

STAN LEE PRESENTS
THE PENULTIMATE
CHAPTER OF THE MOST
SOUL-SEARING MUTANT
STORYLINE EVER!

CONFLICTING CATHODES

X-CUTIONER'S
SONG PART II

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

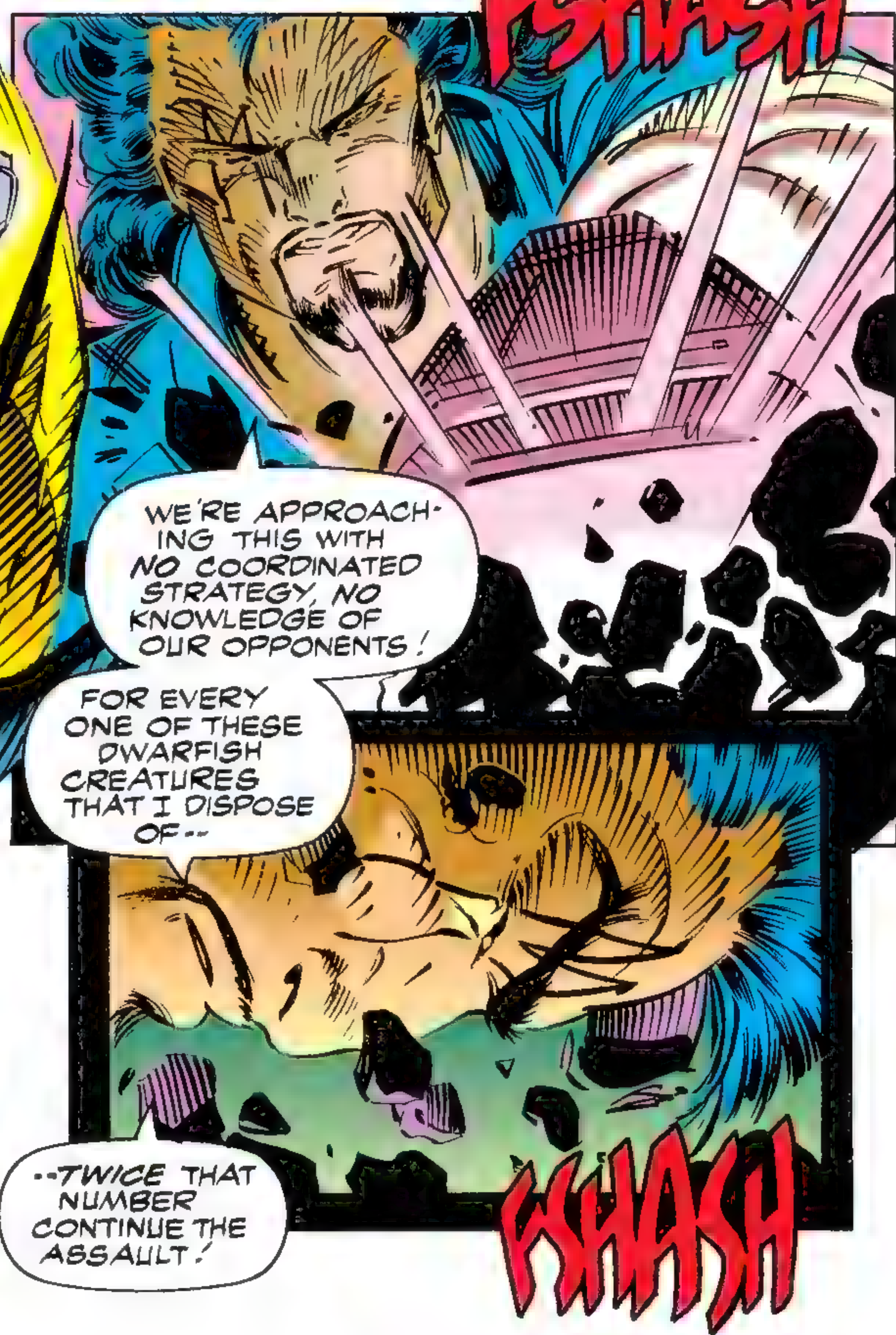
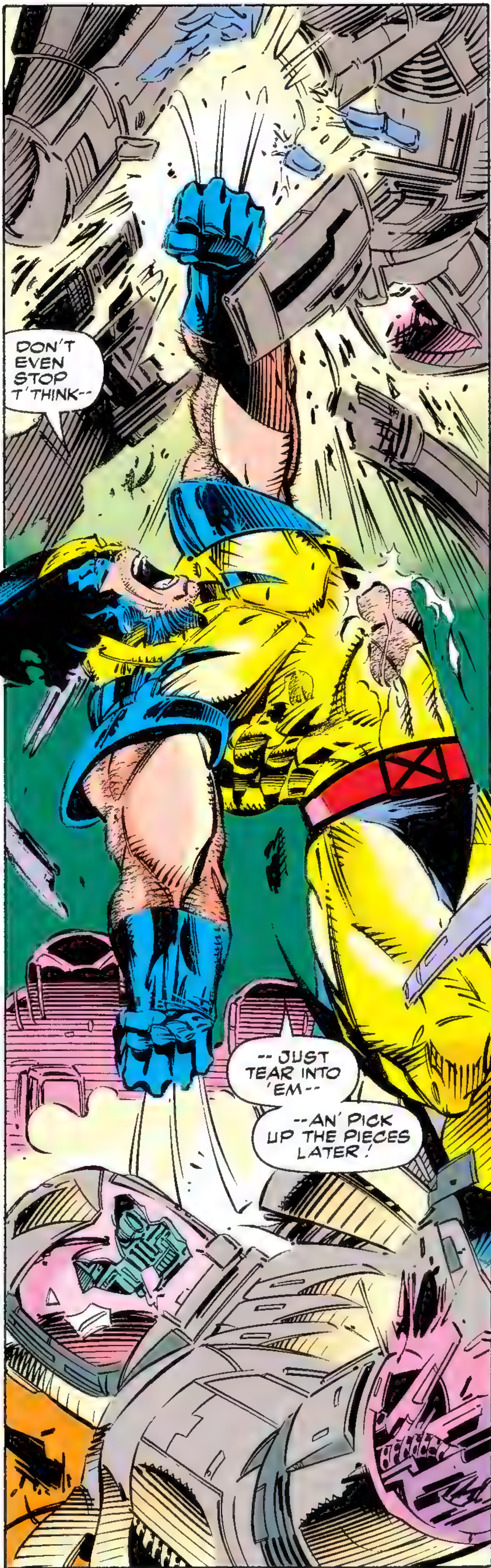
**FABIAN
NICIEZA**
WRITER,
ALL THE PAGES

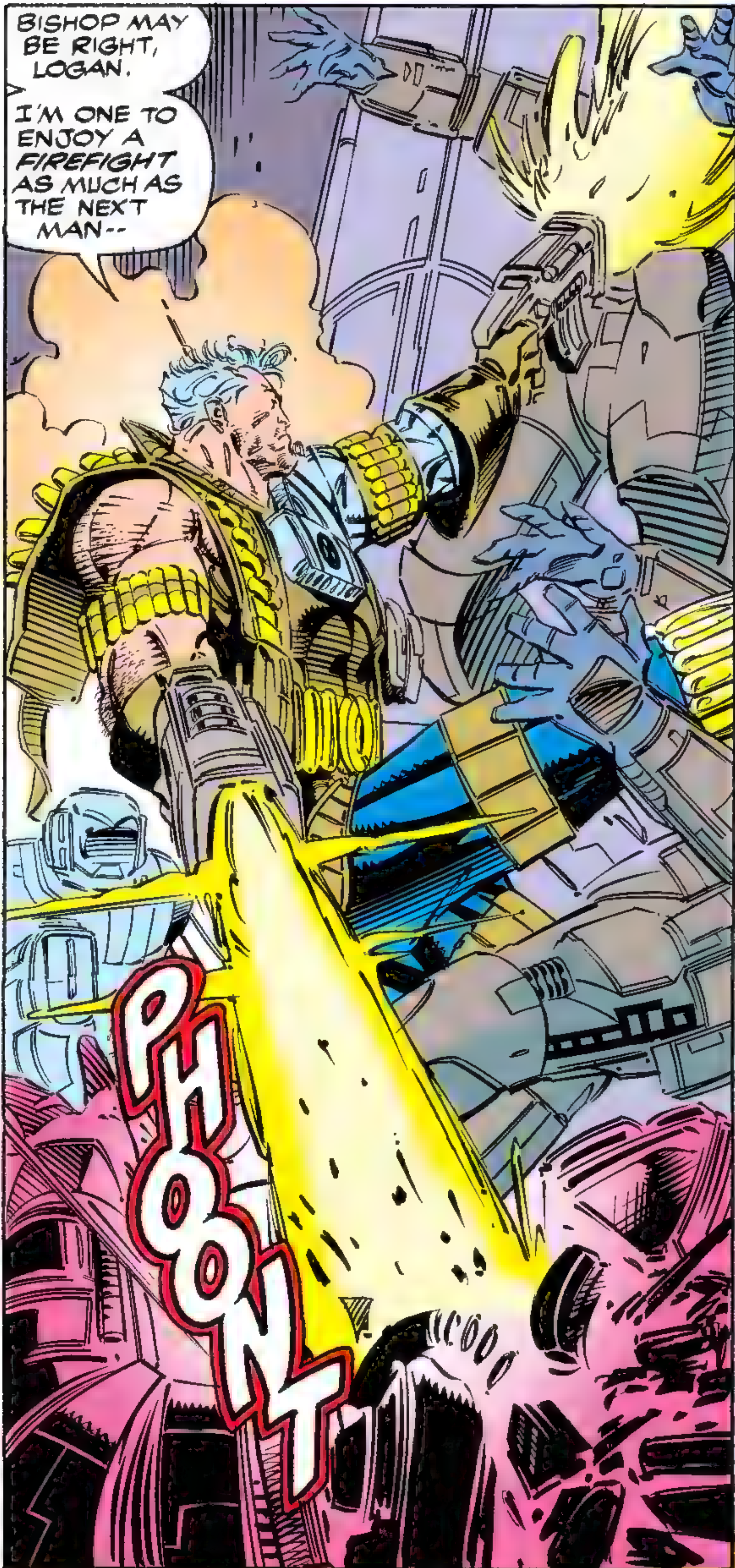
**ANDY
KUBERT**
PENCILER,
INKER, PGS. 20-23

**MARK
PENNINGTON**
INKER,
EVERYTHING ELSE

CHRIS ELIOPoulos - LETTERER
JOE ROSAS - COLORIST

BOB HARRAS EDITOR
TOM DEFALCO EDITOR IN CHIEF





BISHOP MAY
BE RIGHT,
LOGAN.
I'M ONE TO
ENJOY A
FIREFIGHT
AS MUCH AS
THE NEXT
MAN--



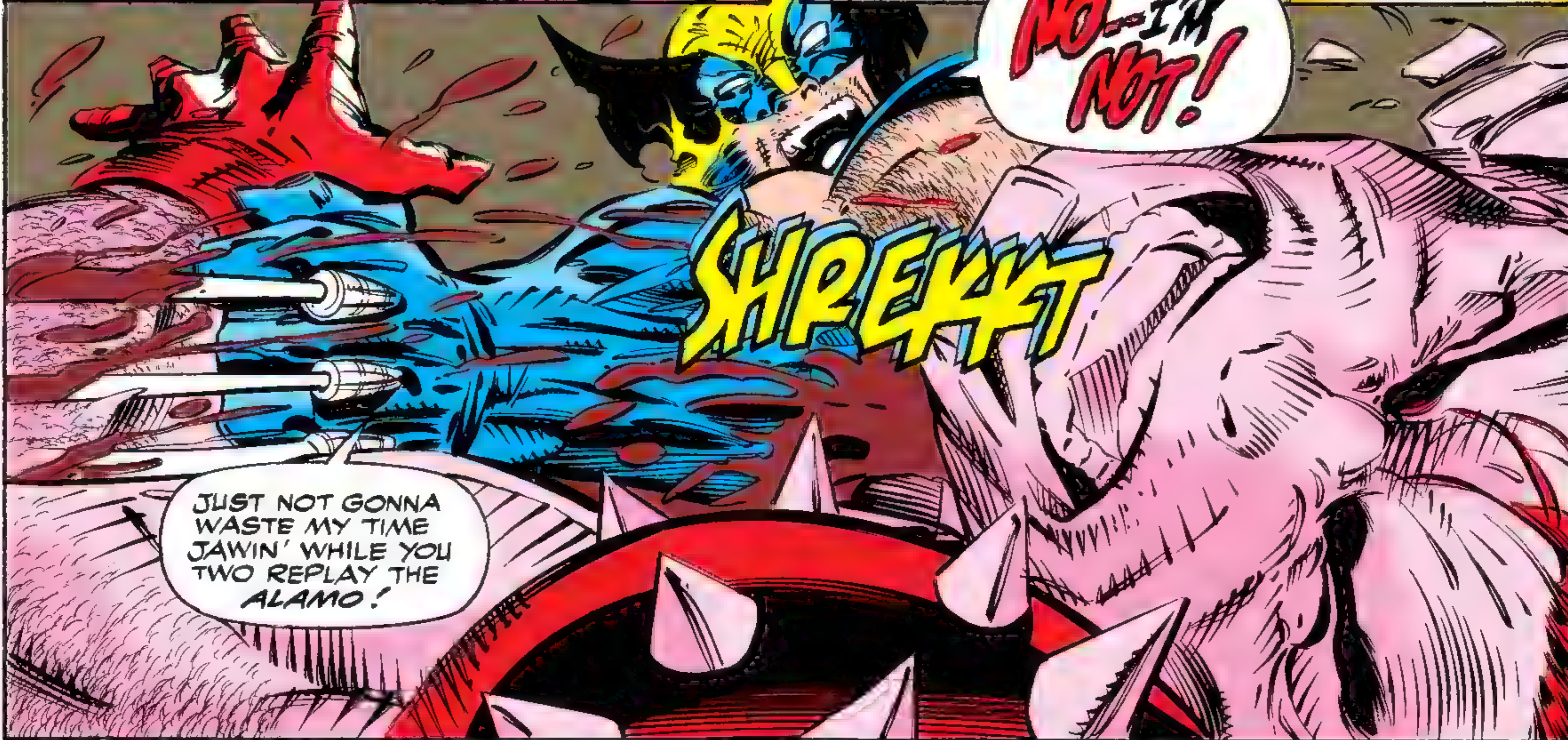
--BUT THESE ODDS
ARE RIDICULOUS
FOR EVEN THE
BEST POKER
PLAYER IN TOWN!

HE'S NOT
LISTENING,
CABLE.

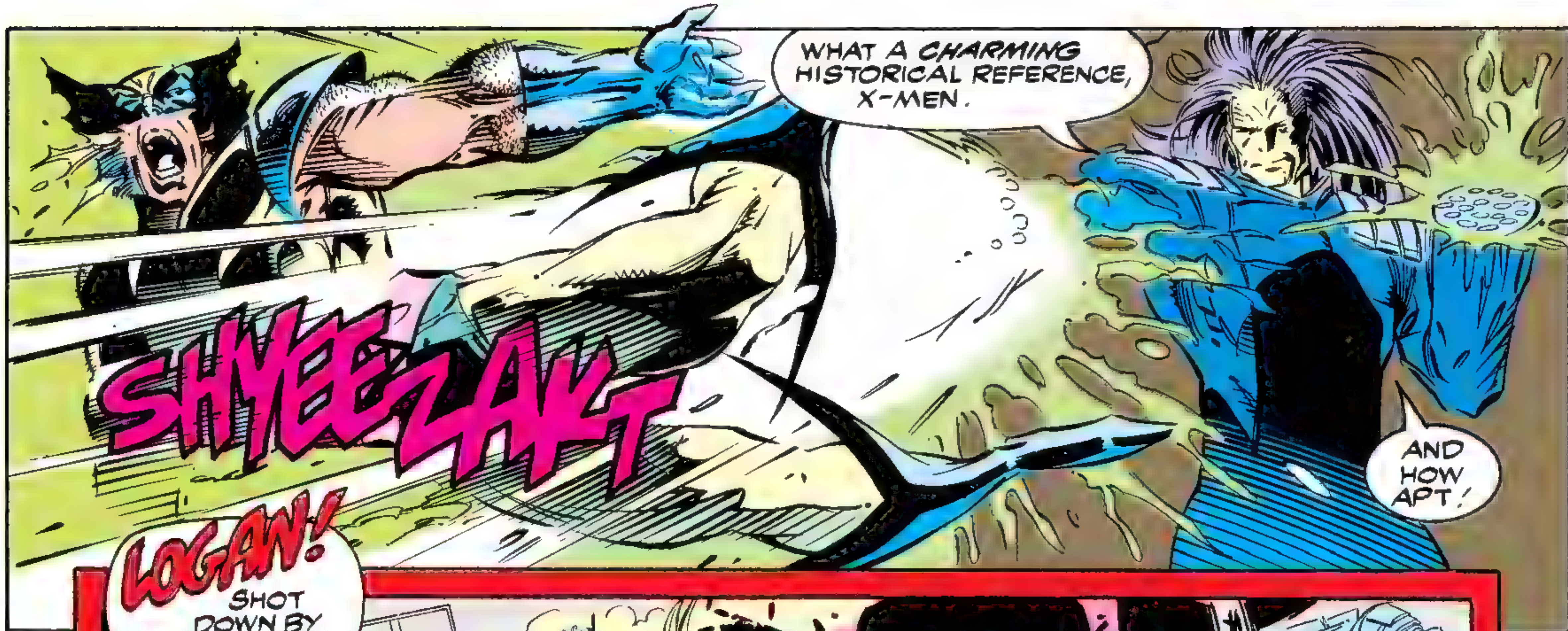


I KNOW.
TOO CAUGHT
UP IN ONE OF
HIS "BERSERKER
RAGES."

NO--I'M
NOT!



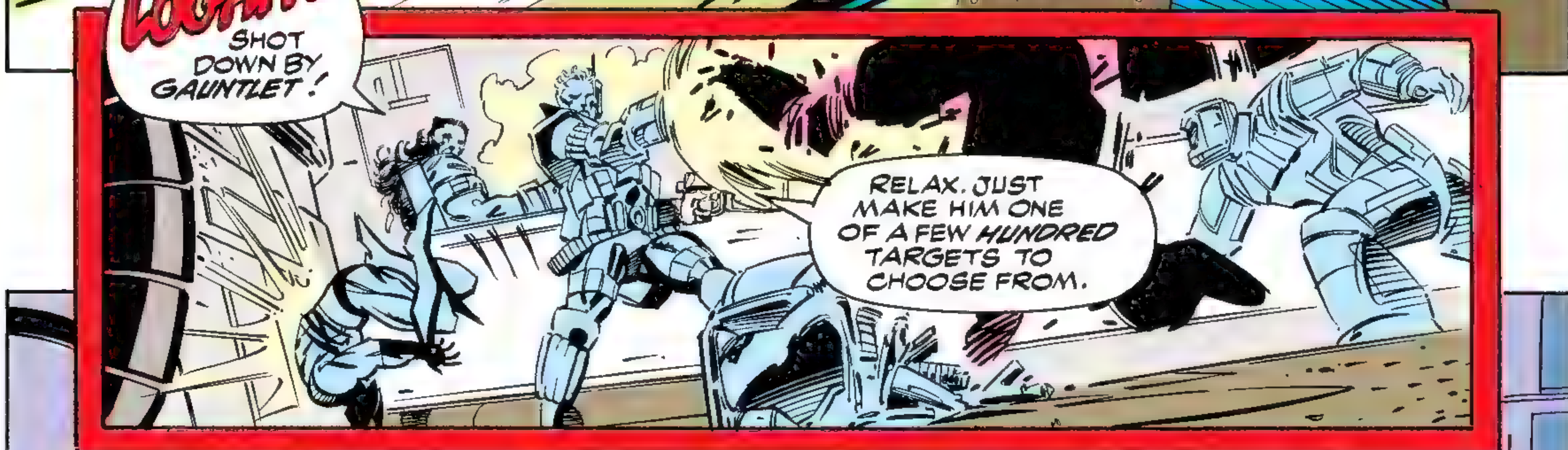
JUST NOT GONNA
WASTE MY TIME
JAWIN' WHILE YOU
TWO REPLAY THE
ALAMO!



SHWEEZAKT

LOGAN!
SHOT
DOWN BY
GAUNTLET!

RELAX. JUST
MAKE HIM ONE
OF A FEW HUNDRED
TARGETS TO
CHOOSE FROM.



LITTLE GOOD
IT DID US. WE'RE
COMPLETELY
SURROUNDED--

-- WITH NO MEANS
OF RETREAT!

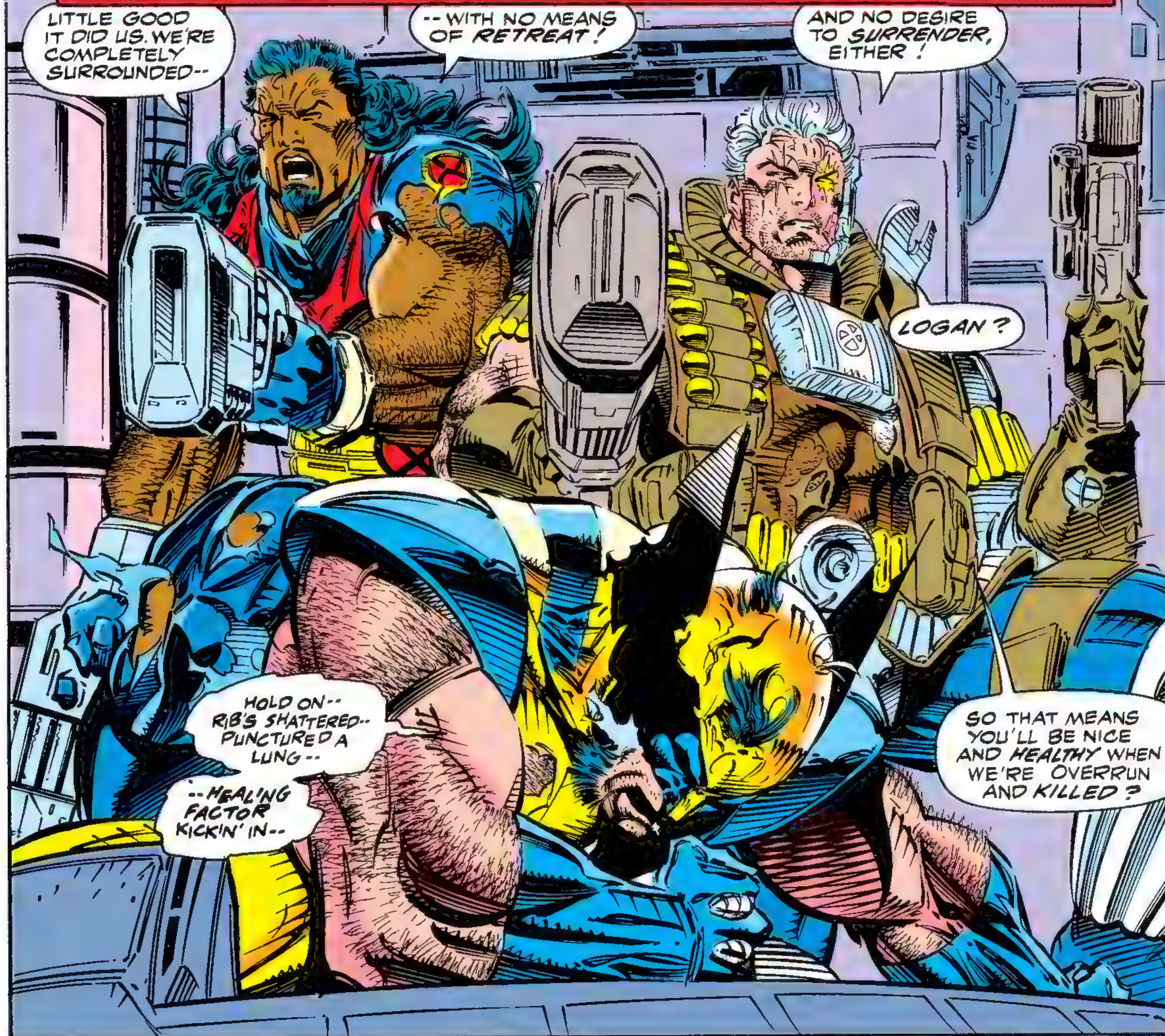
AND NO DESIRE
TO SURRENDER,
EITHER!

LOGAN?

HOLD ON--
RIBS SHATTERED--
PUNCTURED A
LUNG--

-- HEALING
FACTOR
KICKIN' IN--

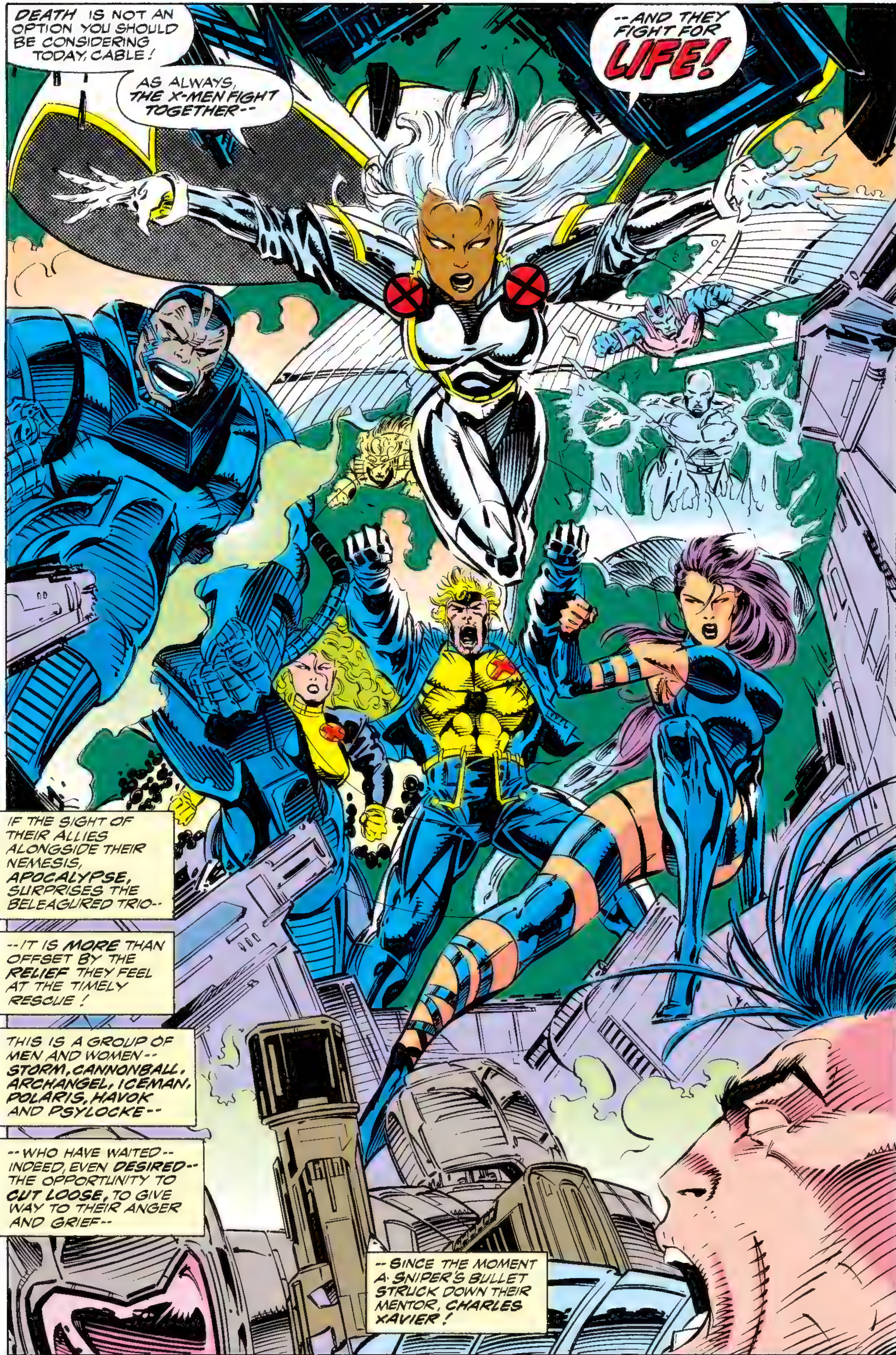
SO THAT MEANS
YOU'LL BE NICE
AND HEALTHY WHEN
WE'RE OVERRUN
AND KILLED?



DEATH IS NOT AN
OPTION YOU SHOULD
BE CONSIDERING
TODAY, CABLE!

AS ALWAYS,
THE X-MEN FIGHT
TOGETHER--

-- AND THEY
FIGHT FOR
LIFE!



IF THE SIGHT OF
THEIR ALLIES
ALONGSIDE THEIR
NEMESIS,
APOCALYPSE,
SURPRISES THE
BELEAGUED TRIO--

--IT IS MORE THAN
OFFSET BY THE
RELIEF THEY FEEL
AT THE TIMELY
RESCUE!

THIS IS A GROUP OF
MEN AND WOMEN--
STORM, CANNONBALL,
ARCHANGEL, ICEMAN,
POLARIS, HAVOK
AND PSYLOCKE--

--WHO HAVE WAITED--
INDEED, EVEN DESIRED--
THE OPPORTUNITY TO
CUT LOOSE, TO GIVE
WAY TO THEIR ANGER
AND GRIEF--

-- SINCE THE MOMENT
A SNIPER'S BULLET
STRUCK DOWN THEIR
MENTOR, CHARLES
XAVIER!

AND NO ONE IS MORE AWARE OF THIS FACT THAN THE MASTERMIND BEHIND THE MAYHEM... **STRIKE!**

THEY FIGHT WITH SUCH SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS, DON'T THEY, ZERO?

MY LITTLE CHESS GAME COMES UNDONE--

--PLAYERS MOVING ACROSS THE BOARD INTO A SCENARIO I WOULD NOT HAVE ANTICIPATED--

--YET ONE WHICH STILL SUITS MY NEEDS.

SUCH A COMPLICATED TAPESTRY WE HAVE WOVEN.

TIME IS BUT A PUZZLE AND WE PLACE THE PIECES WHERE WE SEE FIT.

AS AWKWARDLY, I IMAGINE, AS THE ANALOGIES I SPOUT.

I FIND IT... UNSETTLING... ZERO, THAT AFTER SO LONG, AFTER YEARS BUILT UPON YEARS OF PLANNING...

... THAT I SIT HERE A SPECTATOR TO THE VERY EVENTS I MANUFACTURED.

ODDER STILL, THAT I SHOULD HAVE MANUFACTURED MY OWN PAST AT ALL, ISN'T IT?

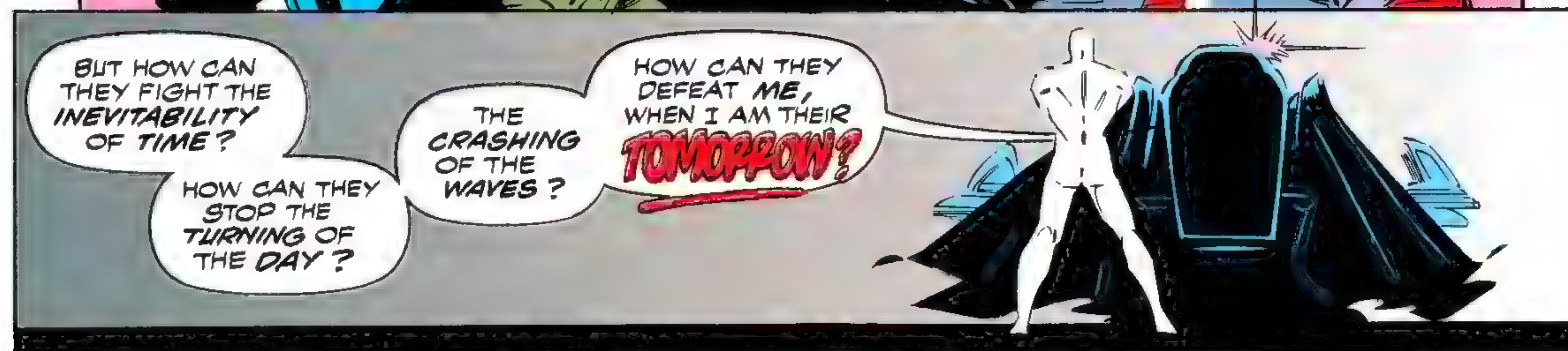


LOOK AT THEM. SUCH A DIVERSITY OF STYLE AND MANNER.

ALL WITH THE SAME OVERRIDING AND OVERWHELMING GOAL--

-- TO PROTECT, PRESERVE AND PERPETUATE THE FOOLISH DREAM THAT HOMO SUPERIOR CAN COEXIST IN HARMONY WITH HOMO SAPIEN.

QUITE PREDICTABLY, THEY ROUTE MY FORCES.

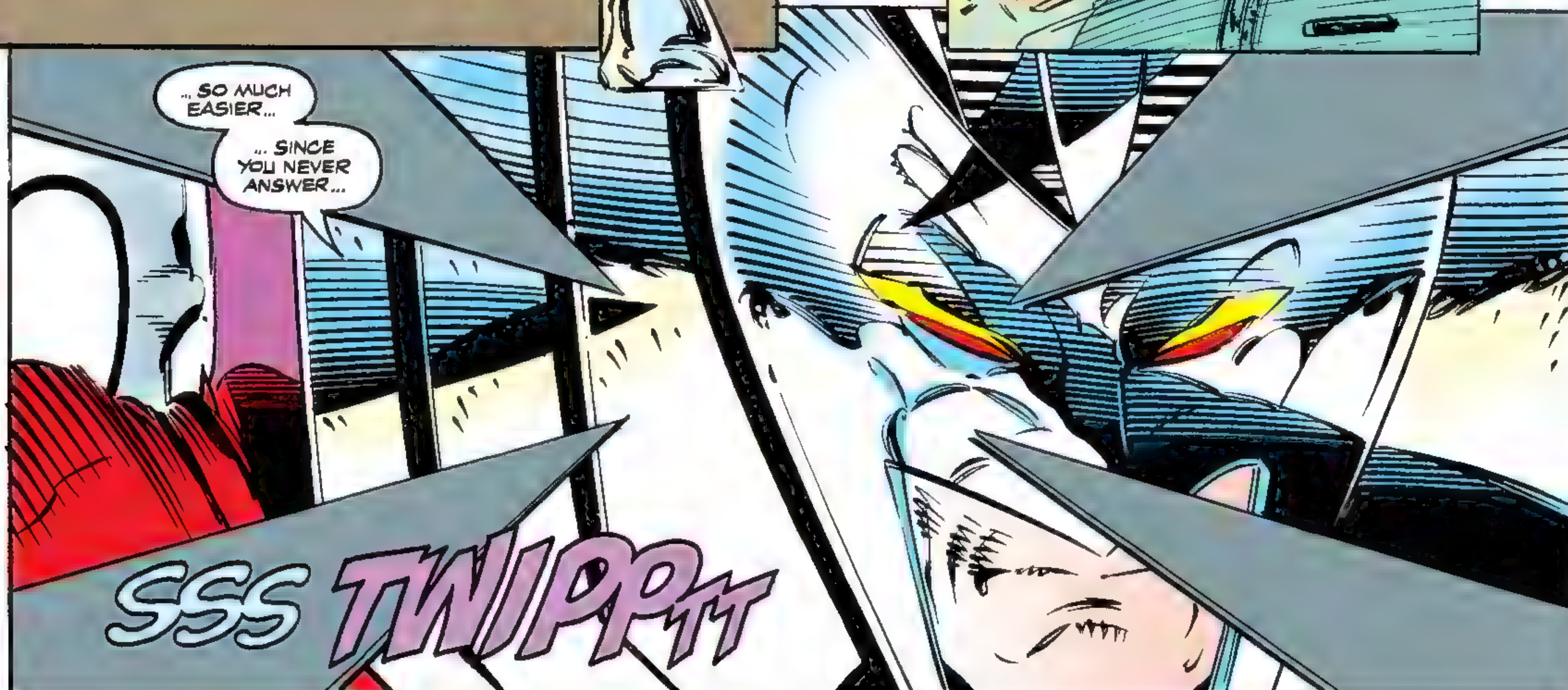
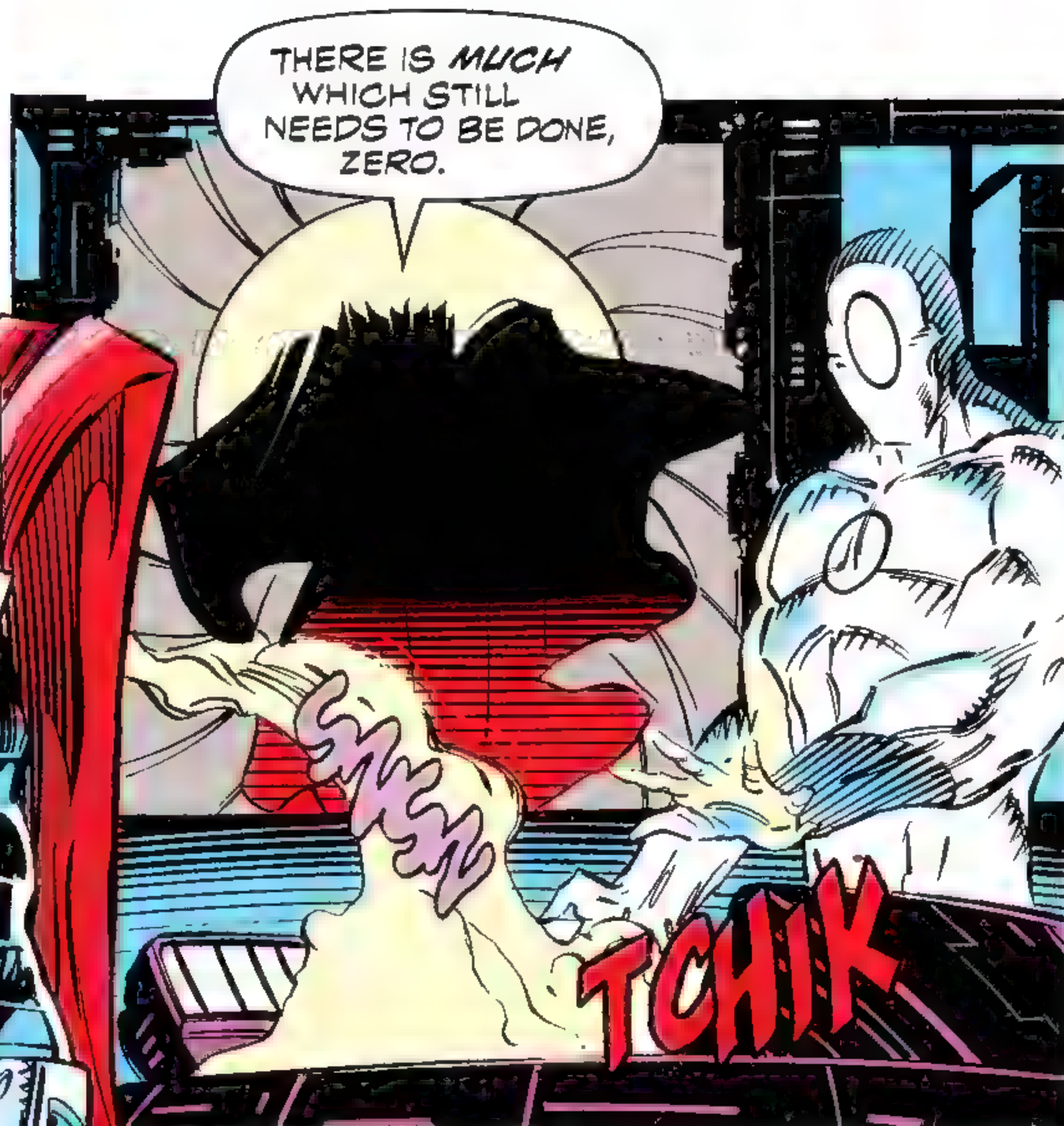
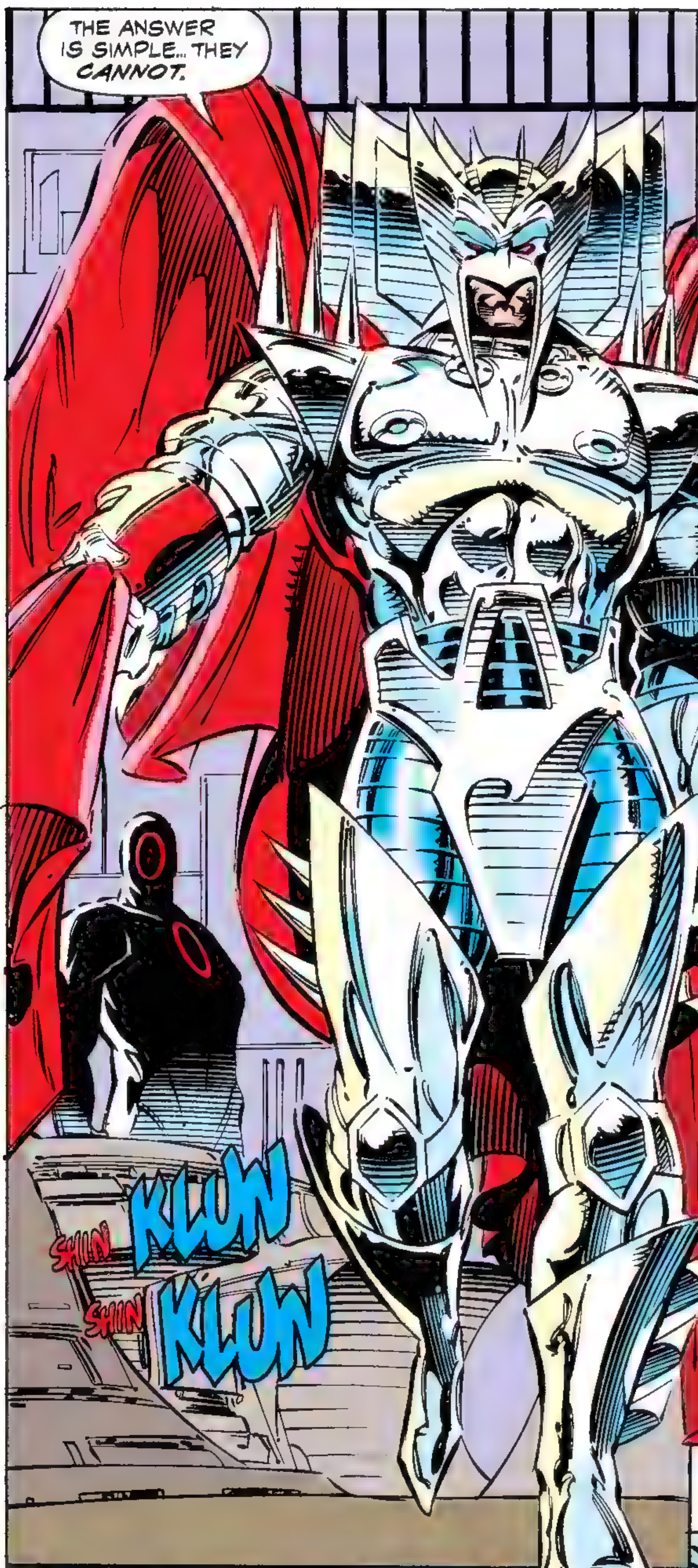


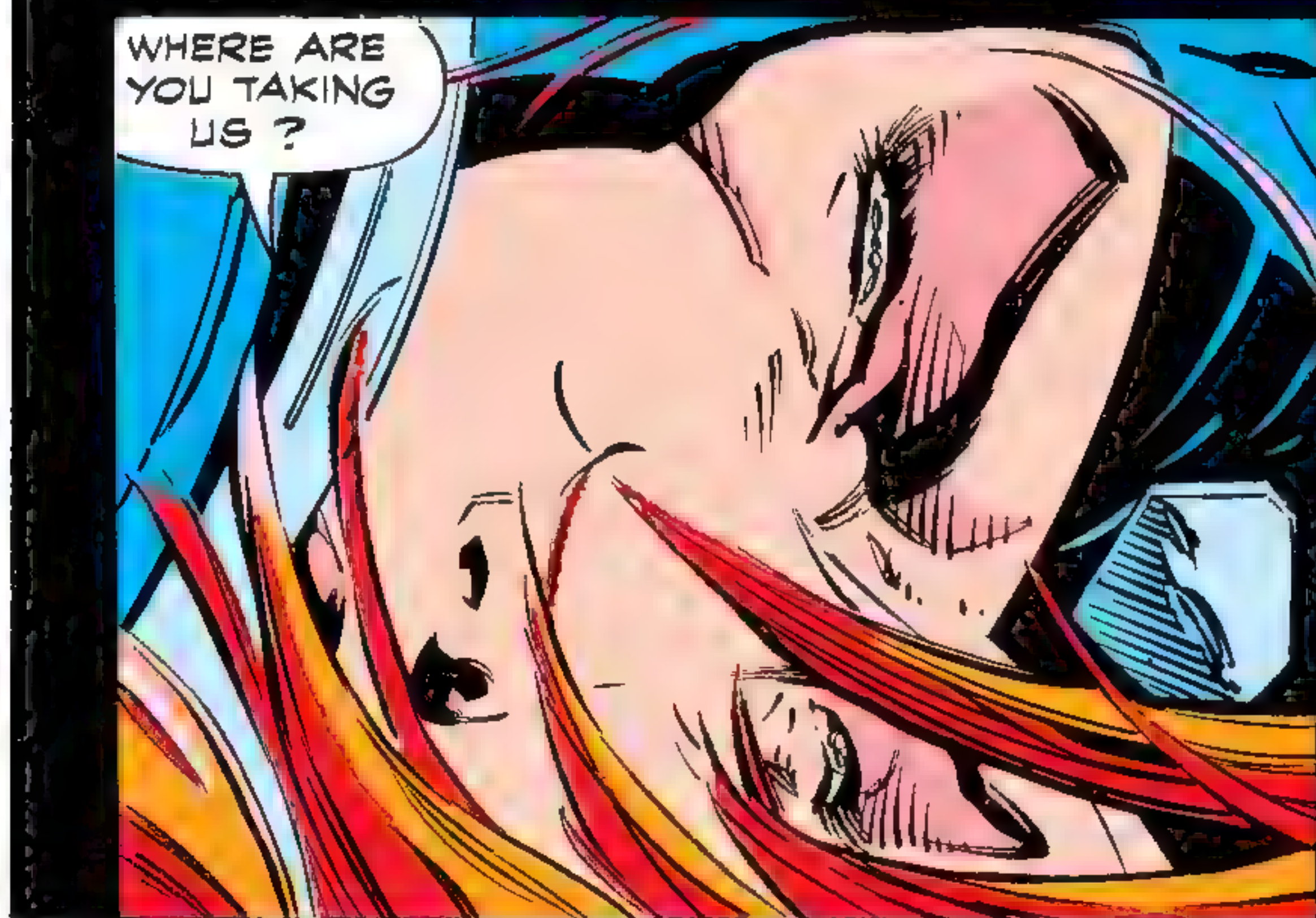
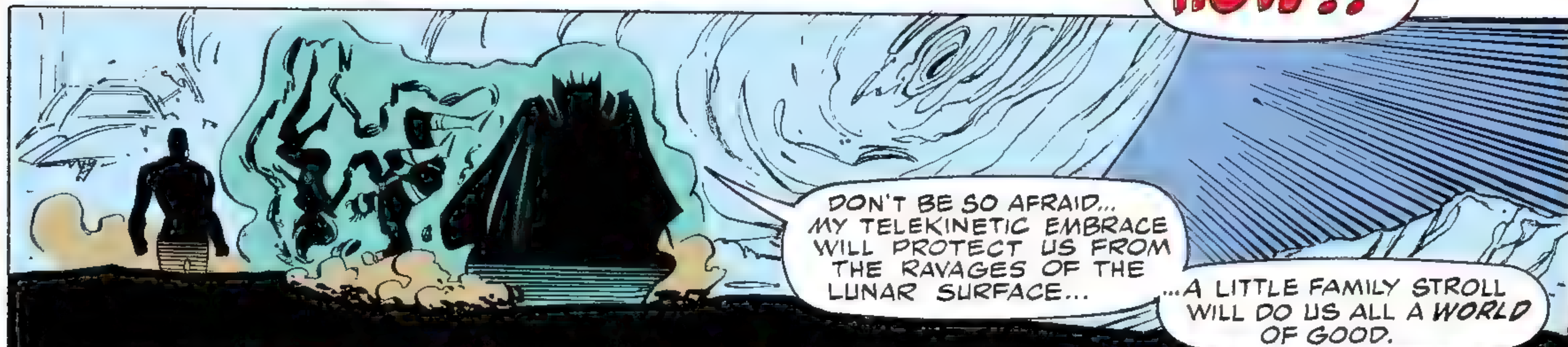
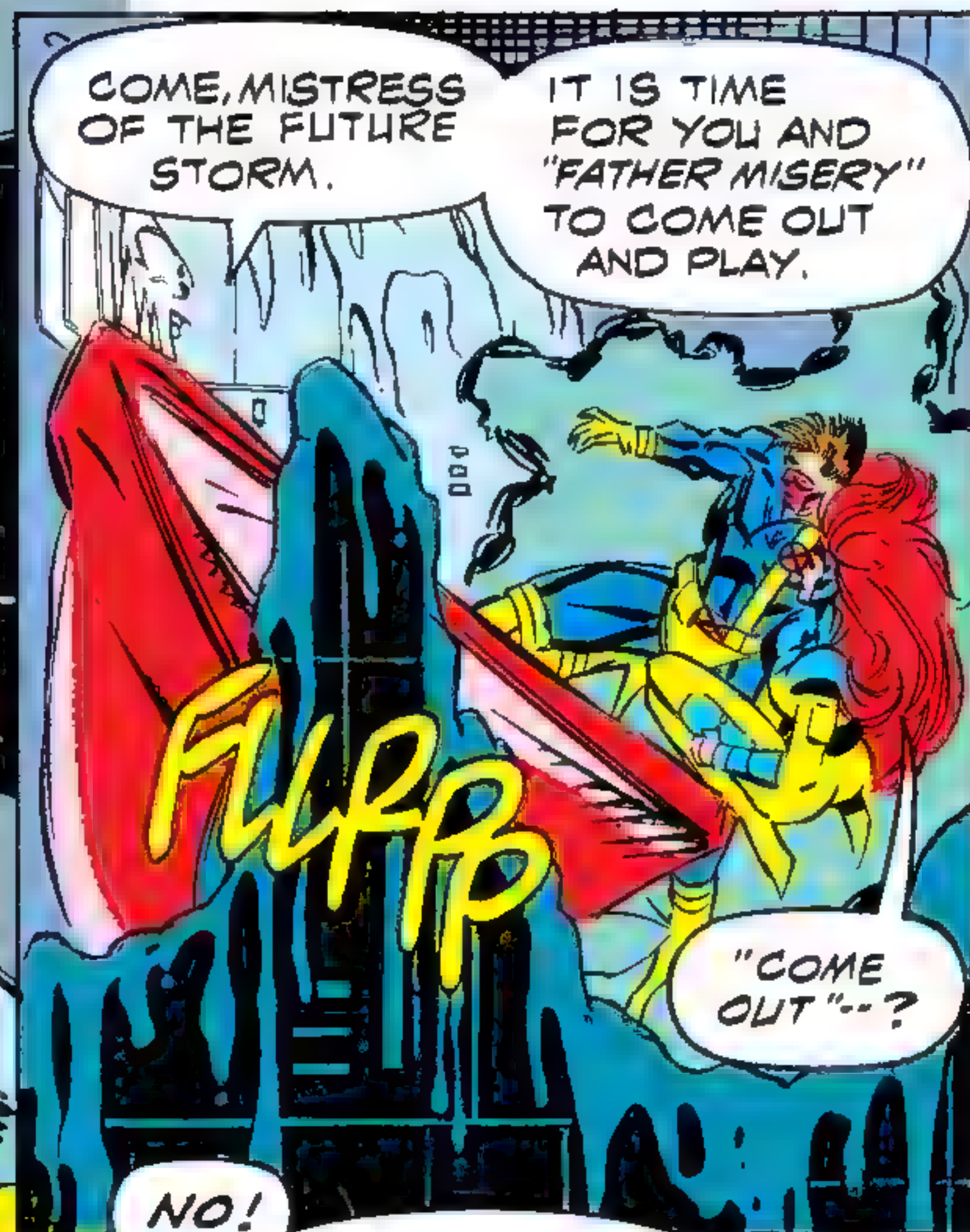
BUT HOW CAN THEY FIGHT THE INEVITABILITY OF TIME?

HOW CAN THEY STOP THE TURNING OF THE DAY?

THE CRASHING OF THE WAVES?

HOW CAN THEY DEFEAT ME, WHEN I AM THEIR **TOMORROW?**





XAVIER'S MANSION IN
SALEM'S CENTER,
WESTCHESTER, NEW
YORK.

AS THE WINDS OF WAR
WHIP ACROSS THE
SURFACE OF THE MOON--

--A STORM
BREWS OVER
THE SKIES OF
THE VENERABLE
HOUSE--

--ERUPTING
BOTH OUT-
SIDE--

--AND
IN--

CHARLES XAVIER
MEDICAL MONITOR
LOG, ENTRY SEVEN.
HENRY MCCOY
RECORDING.

SUBJECT'S FEVER
HAS DROPPED
SLIGHTLY, BUT STILL
BURNS AT 103
DEGREES.

REM SLEEP CYCLE
IS TROUBLED, BUT
SHOWS COMFORTING
SIGNS OF CONSISTENT
ENCEPHALOGRAPHIC
ACTIVITY.

HIS BODY IS
MENDING, LITTLE
BY LITTLE, FROM THE
TRAUMA INDUCED BY
THE CELLULAR INTRUSION
OF THE *TECHNO-ORGANIC*
VIRUS, THANKS TO APOCA-
LYPSE'S CONFRONTATIONAL
THERAPUTIC APPROACH.

OF CHARLES XAVIER'S
BODY, I HAVE HIGH
HOPES AND FULL EX-
PECTATIONS FOR A
COMPLETE RECOV-
ERY...

... I FIND MYSELF
CONSUMED BY
OTHER FEARS. FOR
INSTANCE, WHAT
ABOUT HIS MIND?

WHAT IS GOING
ON INSIDE
THAT INCREDIBLE
BRAIN RIGHT
NOW?

STRYFE'S MOONBASE.
FROM THE OUTSIDE, IT
IS A MIRACLE OF
ELEGANCE AND
GRACE...

... AN ARCHITECTURAL
WONDER WHICH
SPEAKS VOLUMES
FOR MAN'S CAPACITY
TO LEARN, BUILD AND
PROSPER.

FROM THE INSIDE,
HOWEVER, IT SUCCUMBS
TO HIS BASEST
INSTINCTS--IT BREATHES
WITH PRIMITIVE PASSIONS--

--ANGER, HATRED
AND UNRELENTING
VIOLENCE!

WE HAVE MUCH
WHICH MUST STILL BE
ACCOMPLISHED,
X-MEN.

OUR FIRST
PRIORITY IS TO
FIND CYCLOPS
AND JEAN.

AGREED,
STORM--

-- BUT WE ALSO
BETTER FINISH
OFF THE DARK
RIDERS --

-- AND
CONFRONT
STRYFE!

POLARIS,
CANNONBALL,
CABLE AND
I ARE
ALPHA --

-- PSYLOCKE,
WOLVERINE AND
STORM, BETA
UNIT.

SO DIVVY UP
THE PLAYERS
AND LET'S START
LOOKIN'!

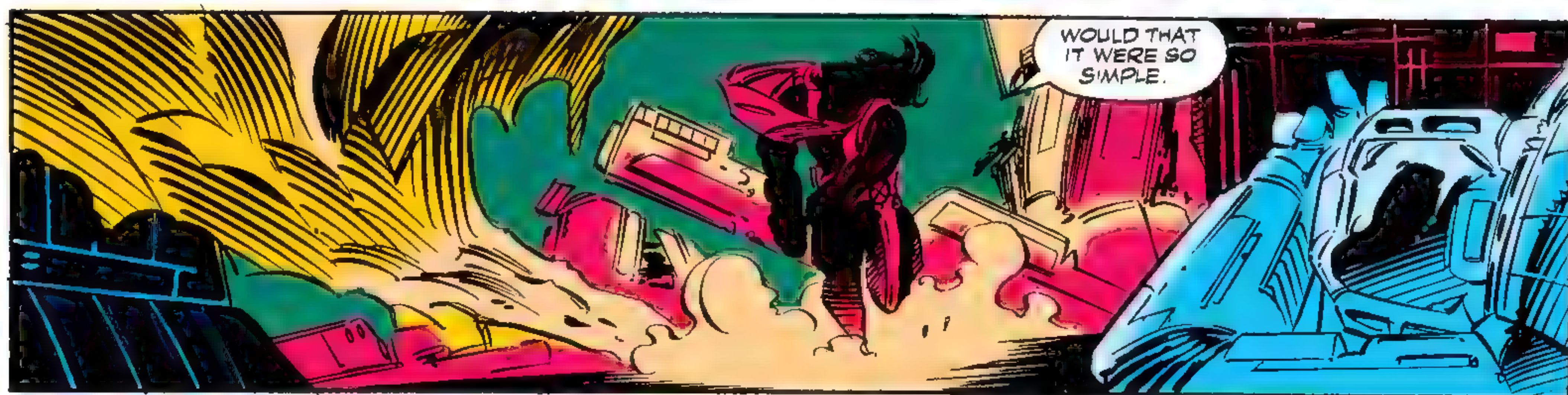
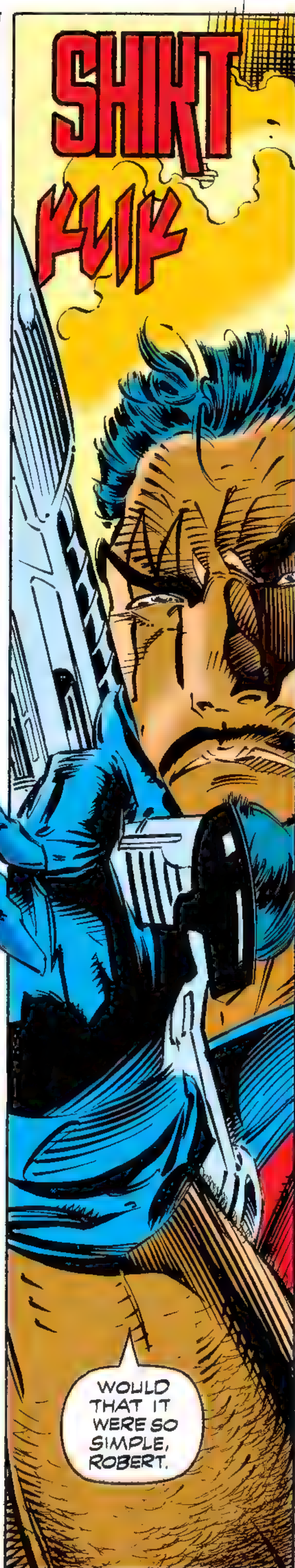
ALL OF YOU
GO. PLAY THE
PART OF THE
FAMILY.

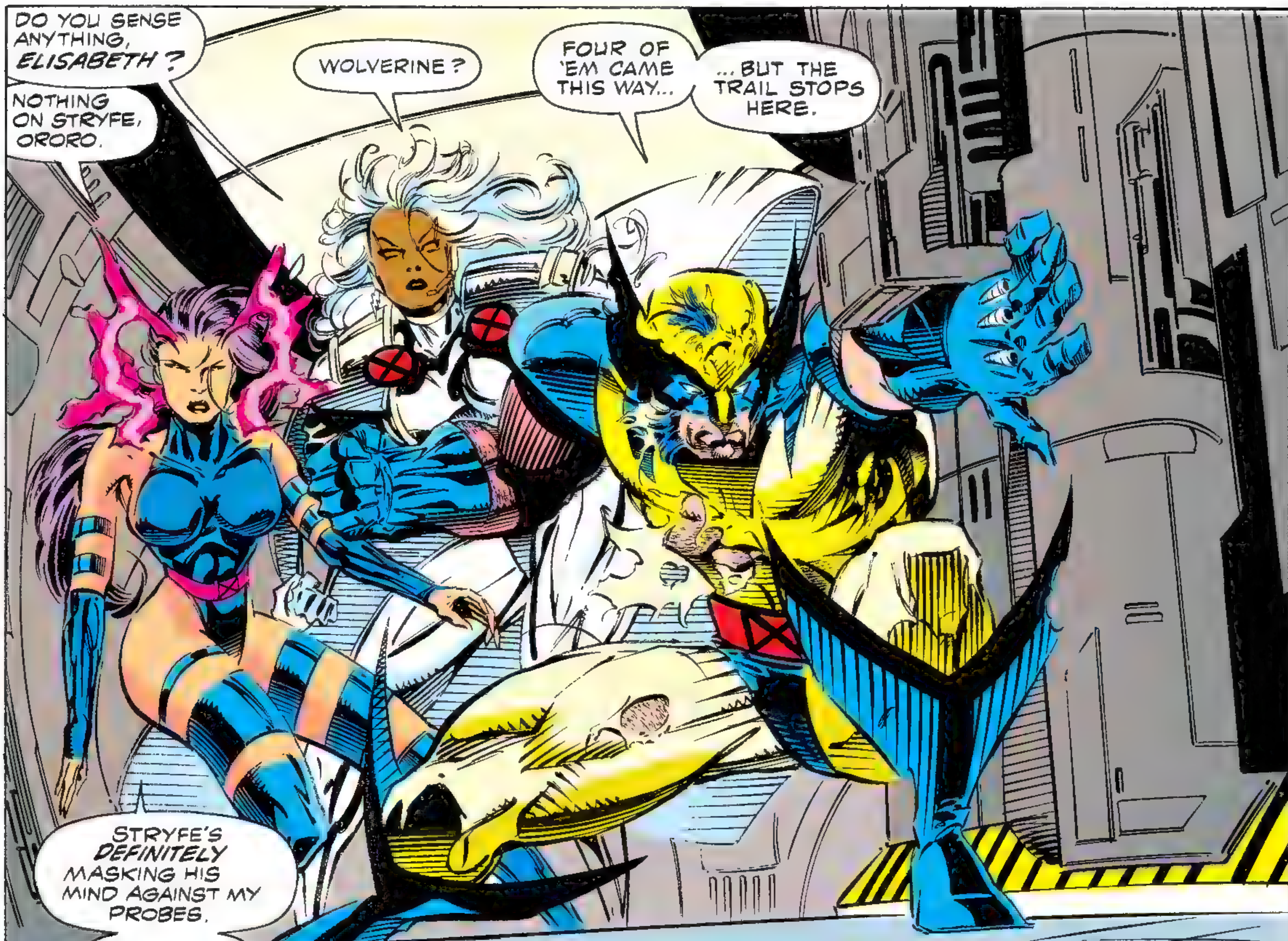
SURVIVAL OF
THE FITTEST,
APOCALYPSE?

ALWAYS THE SAME
FOR YOU--ONE MAN
AGAINST ALL ODDS?

AS I HAVE
LIVED MY
ENTIRE LIFE.

I WILL HUNT
ALONE.





DO YOU SENSE ANYTHING, ELISABETH?

NOTHING ON STRYFE, ORORO.

WOLVERINE?

FOUR OF 'EM CAME THIS WAY...

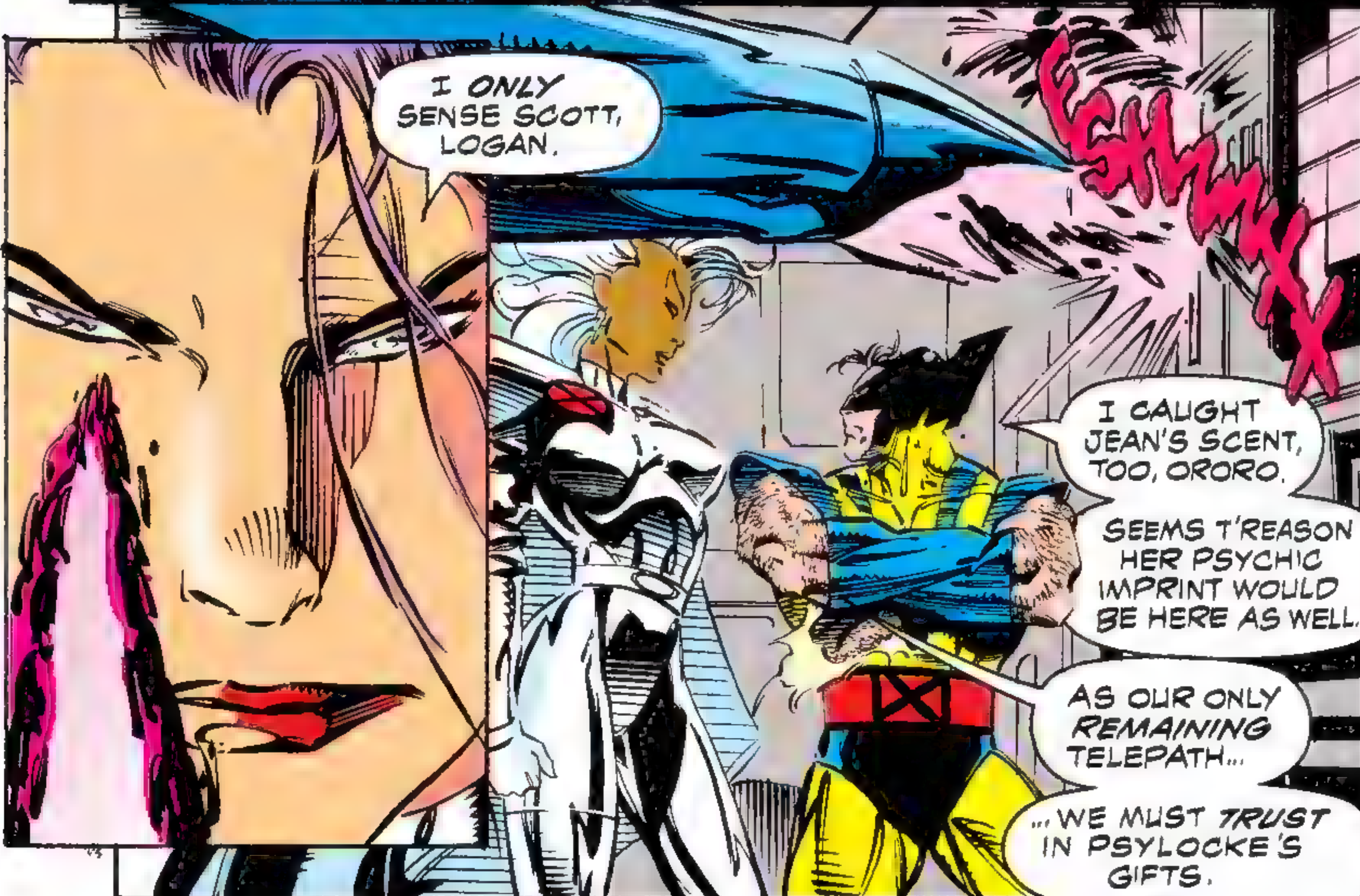
... BUT THE TRAIL STOPS HERE.

STRYFE'S DEFINITELY MASKING HIS MIND AGAINST MY PROBES.

BUT I DO SENSE FAINT RESIDUAL TRACES OF CYLOPS--

--BEHIND THAT DOOR UP AHEAD.

WHAT ABOUT JEANIE, BETTS? SHE *SHOULD* BE WITH SCOTTIE...



I ONLY SENSE SCOTT, LOGAN.

I CAUGHT JEAN'S SCENT, TOO, ORORO.

SEEMS T'REASON HER PSYCHIC IMPRINT WOULD BE HERE AS WELL.

AS OUR ONLY REMAINING TELEPATH...

...WE MUST TRUST IN PSYLOCKE'S GIFTS.

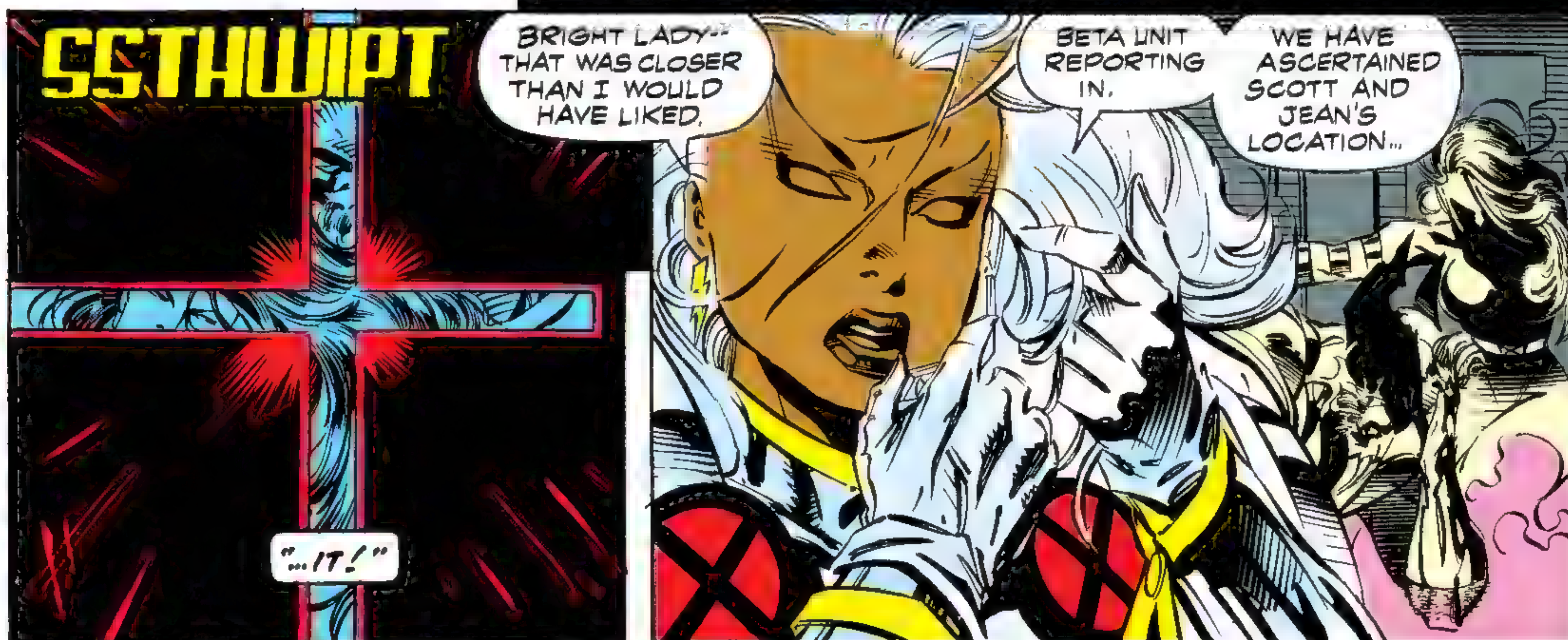
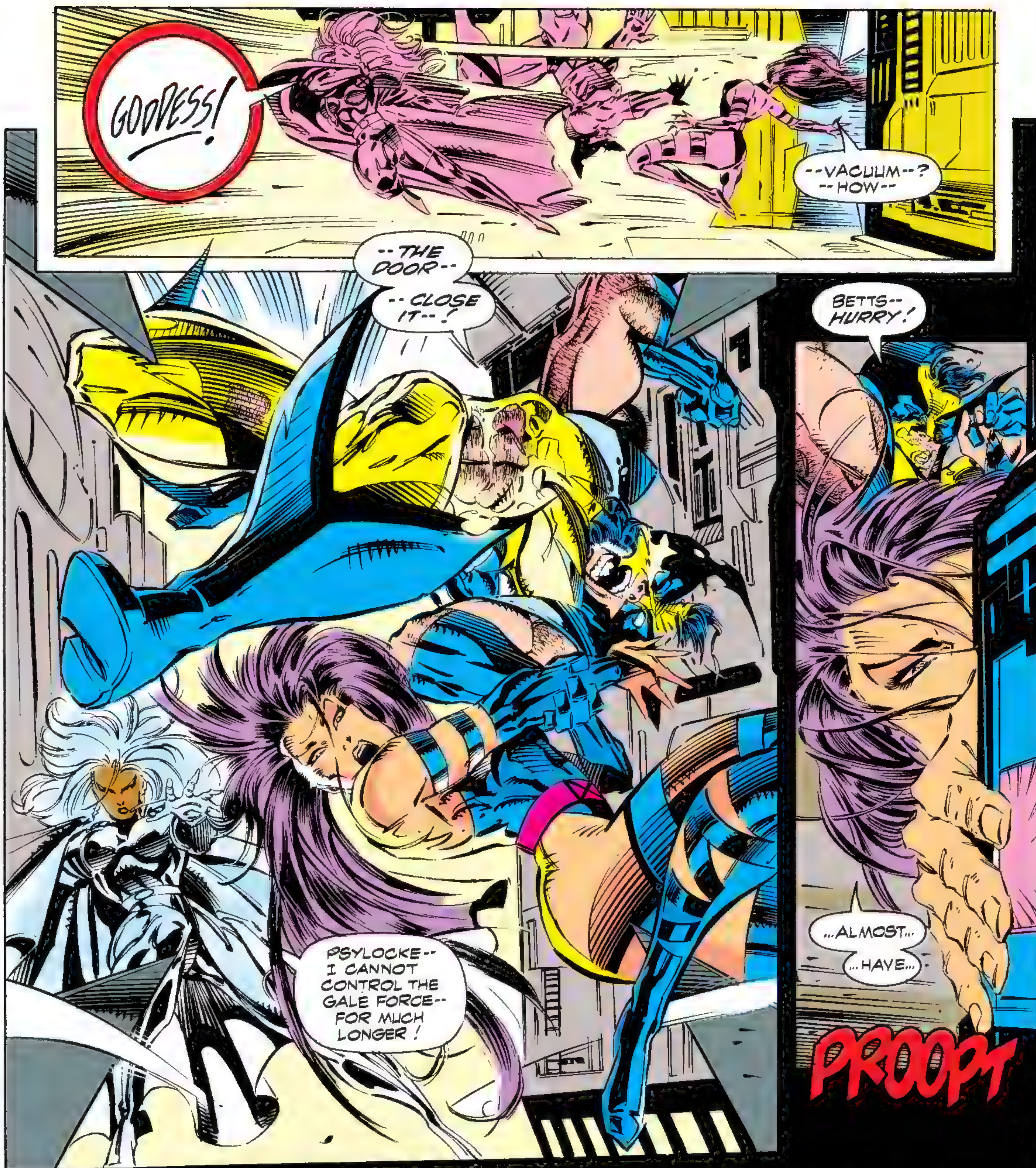


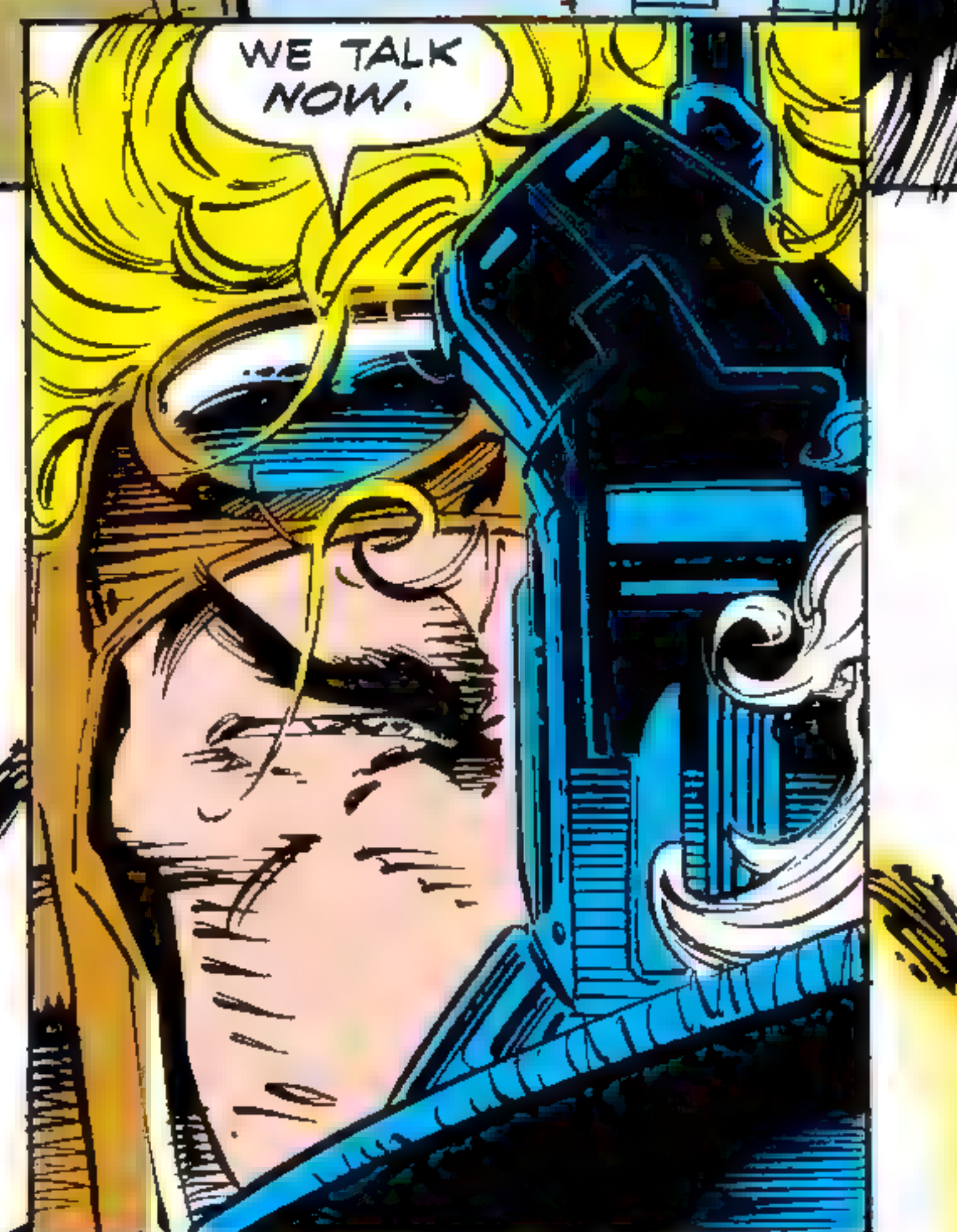
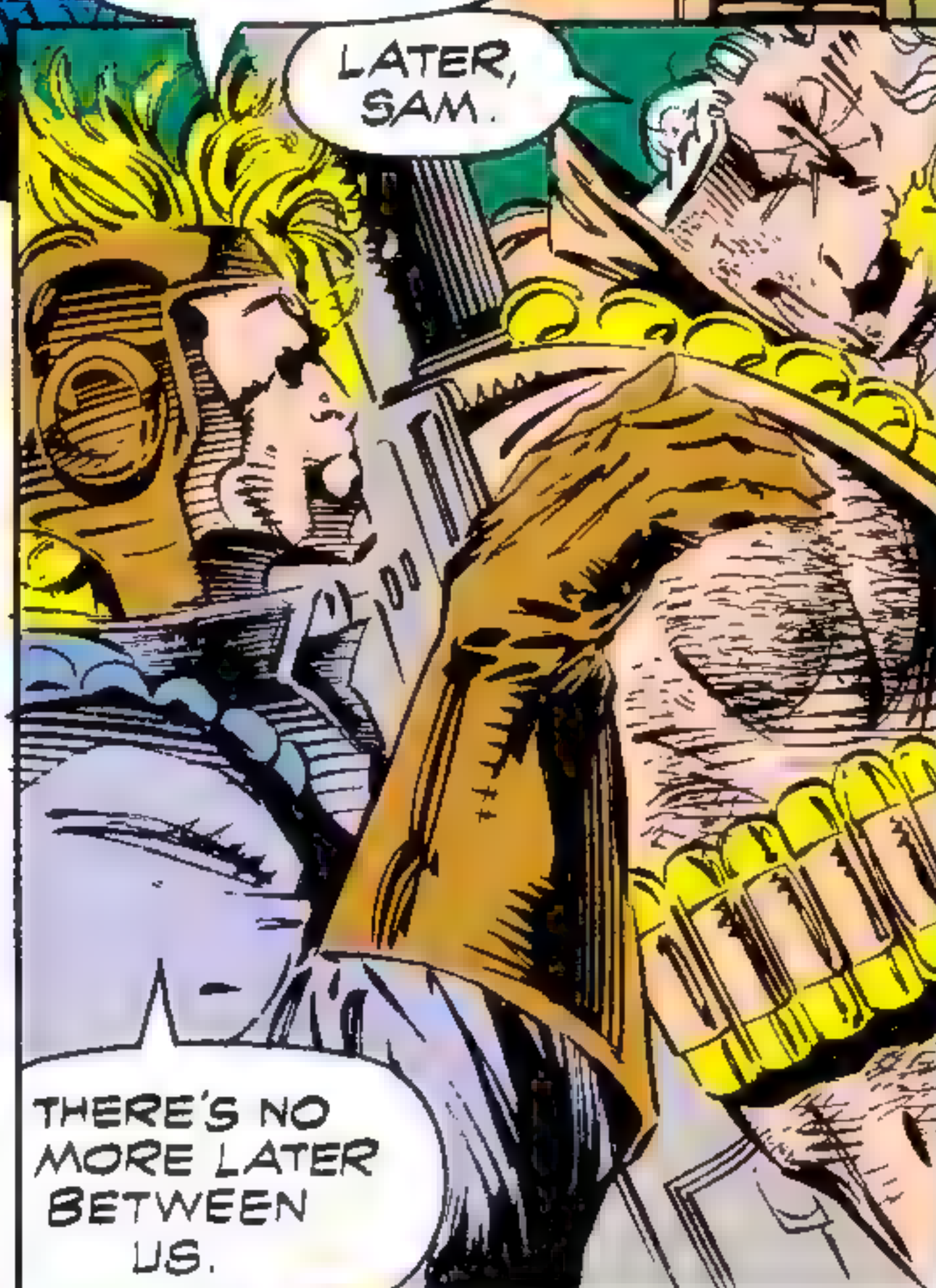
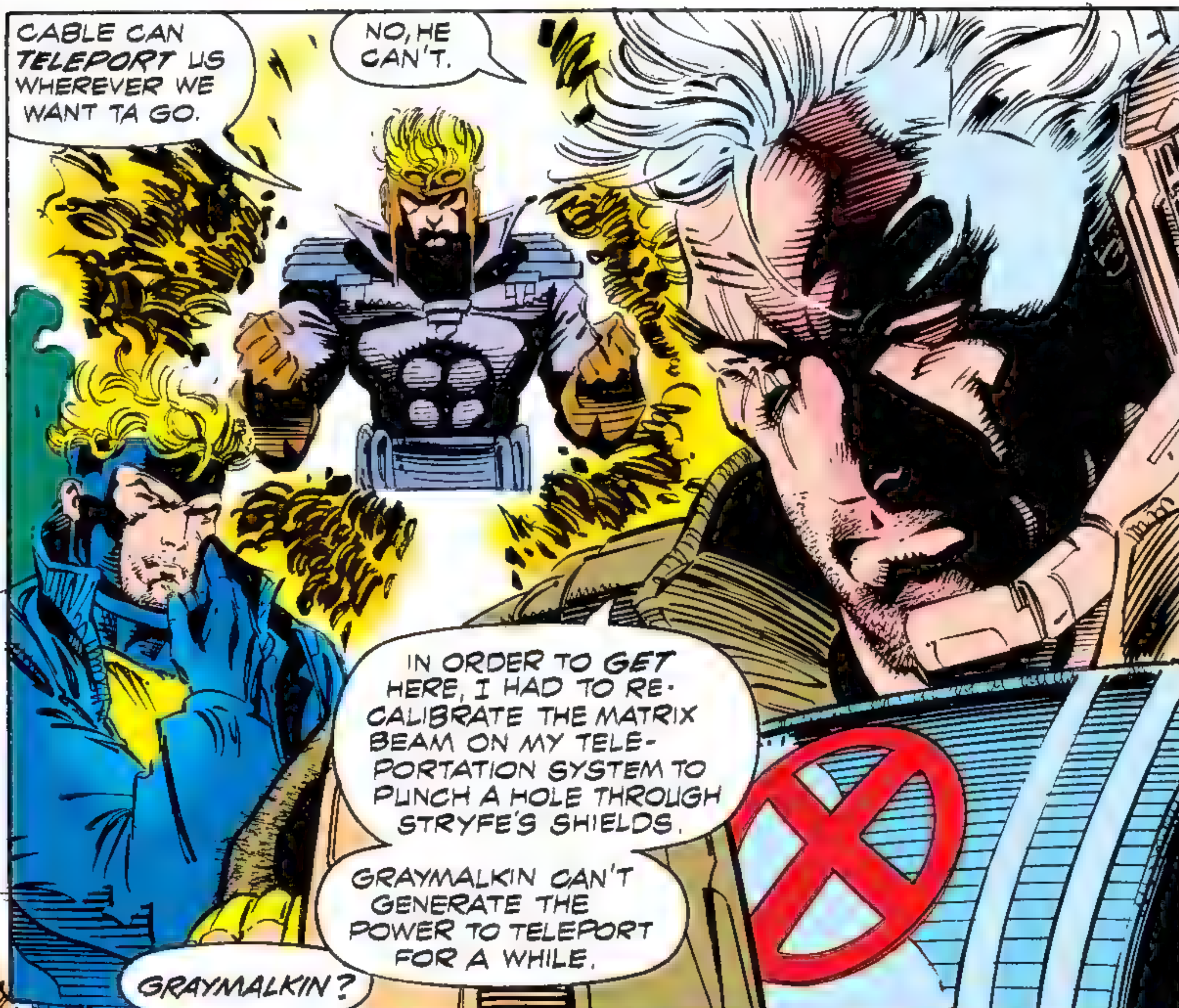
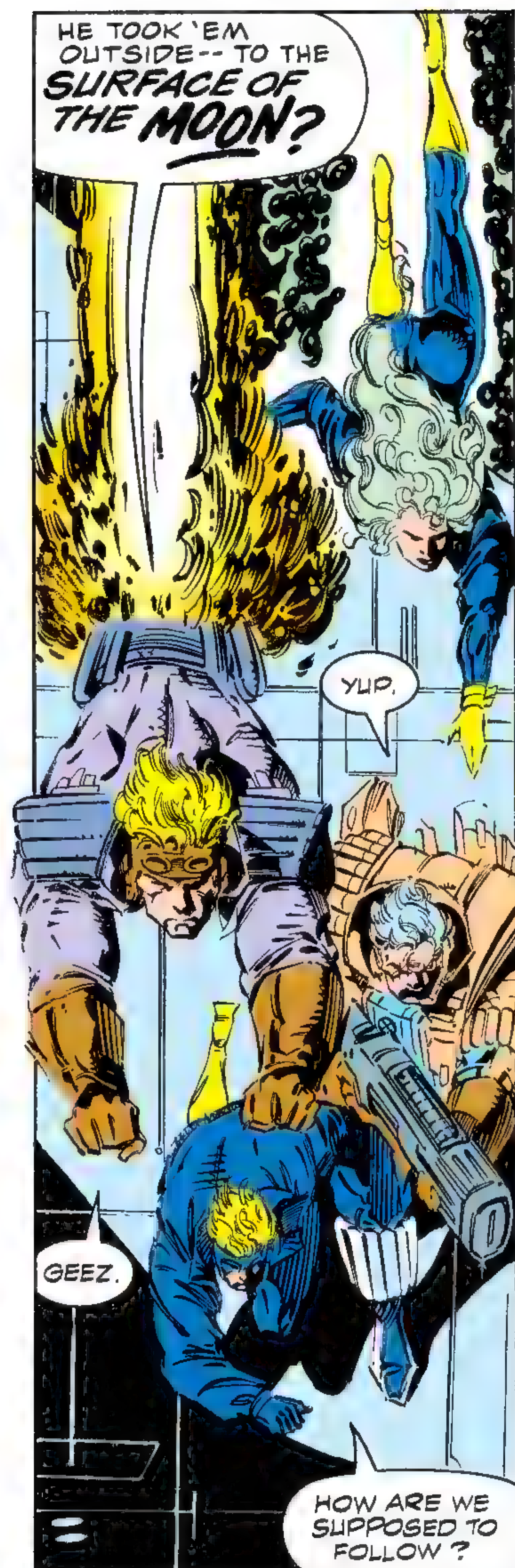
I TELEPATHICALLY OBTAINED AN IMPRINT OF THE CODED LOCK SEQUENCE.

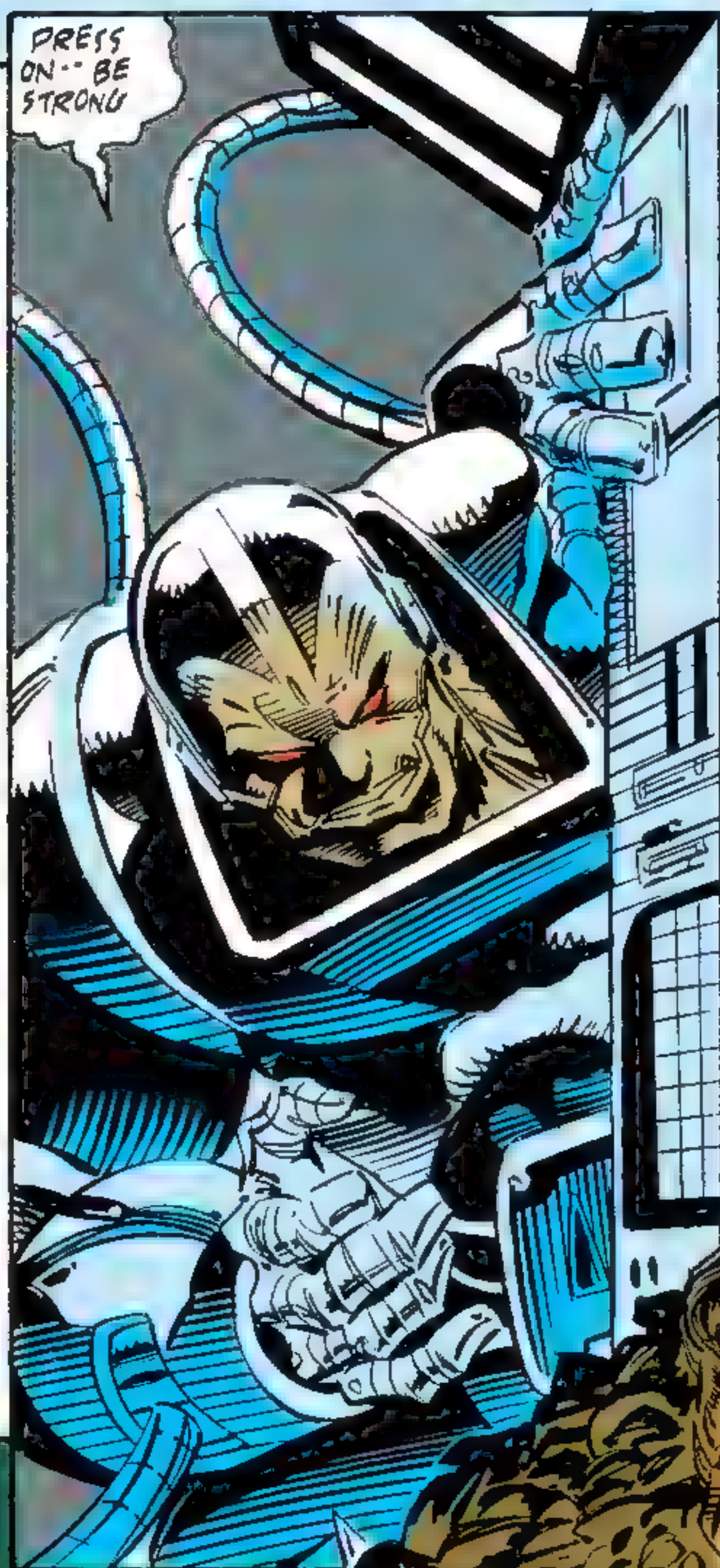
GET READY...

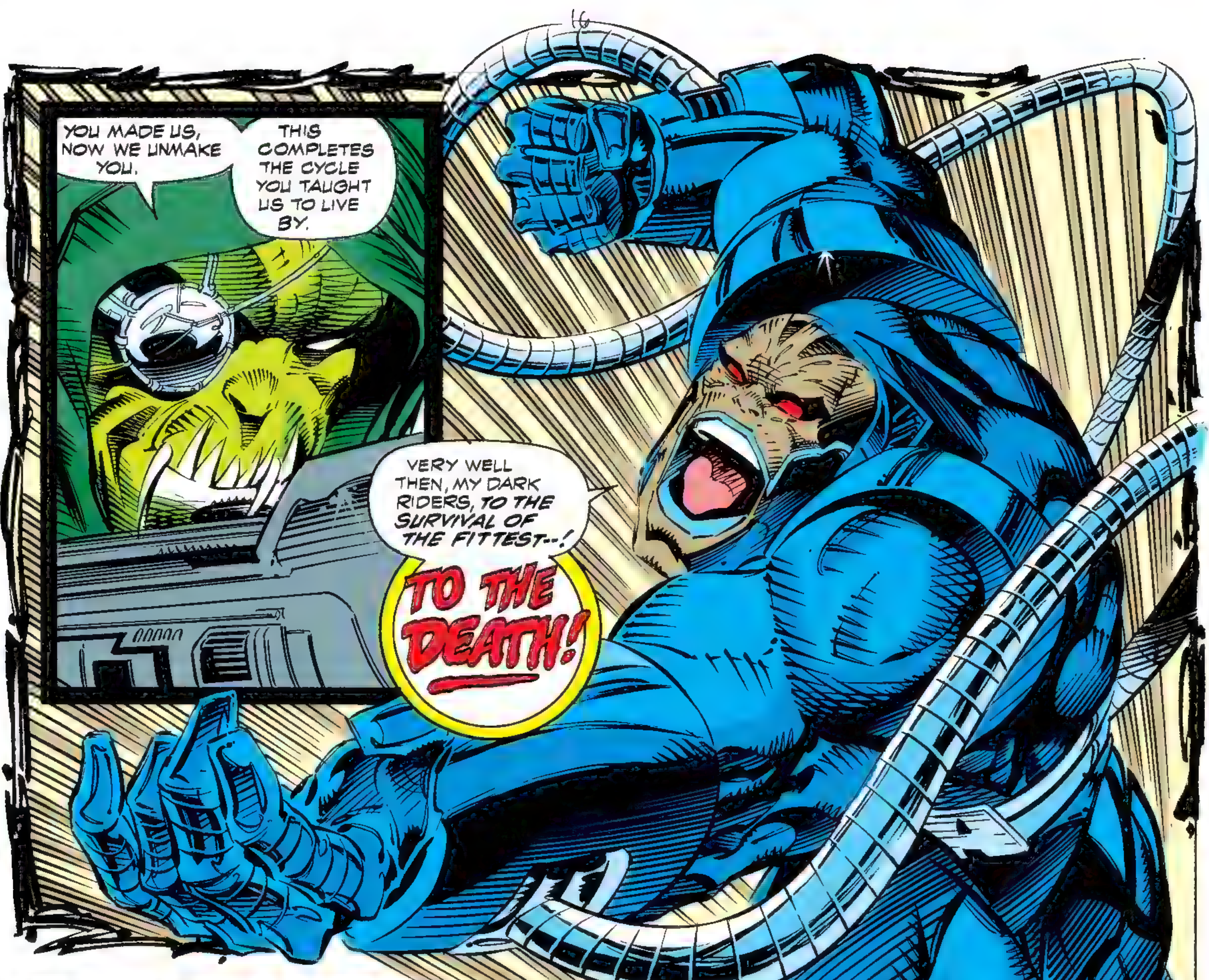
beep
beep
broop

...WE'VE NO IDEA WHAT'S BEYOND THIS DOOR.









YOU MADE US,
NOW WE UNMAKE
YOU.

THIS
COMPLETES
THE CYCLE
YOU TAUGHT
US TO LIVE
BY.

VERY WELL
THEN, MY DARK
RIDERS, TO THE
SURVIVAL OF
THE FITTEST--!

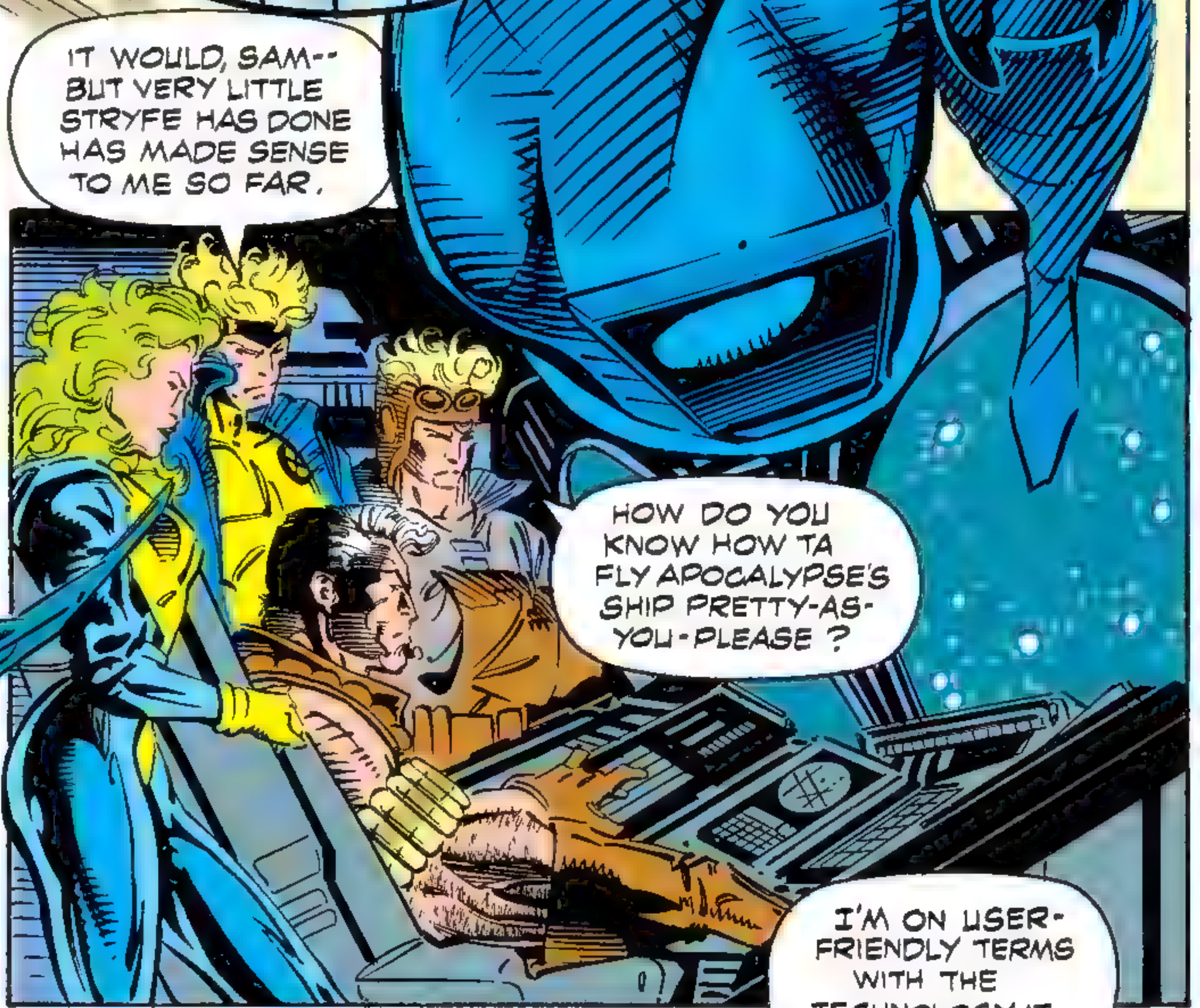
**TO THE
DEATH!**



WHAT EXACTLY
ARE WE LOOKING
FOR-- THREE PEOPLE
WALKING ON THE
MOON ?

MAYBE.

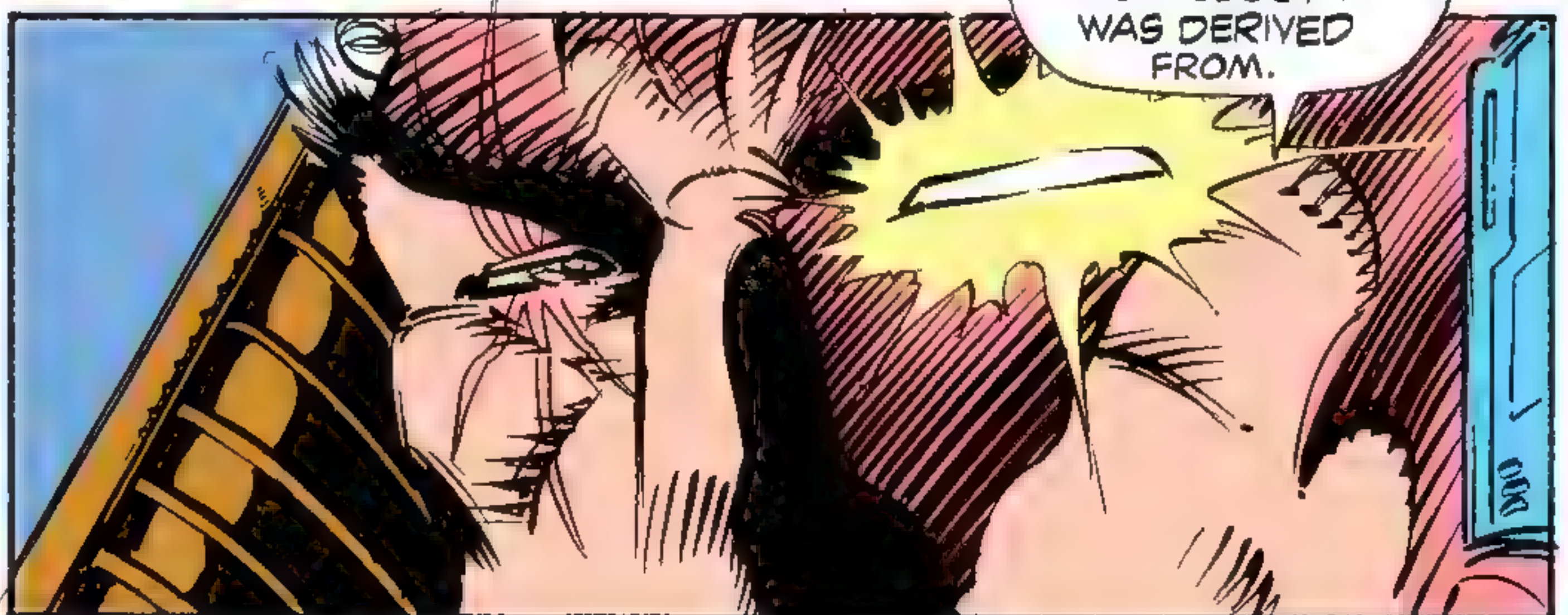
IF THEY DID
LEAVE THE MOON-
BASE, WOULDN'T IT
MAKE SENSE
STRYFE WAS GOIN'
SOMEWHERE
SPECIFIC ?

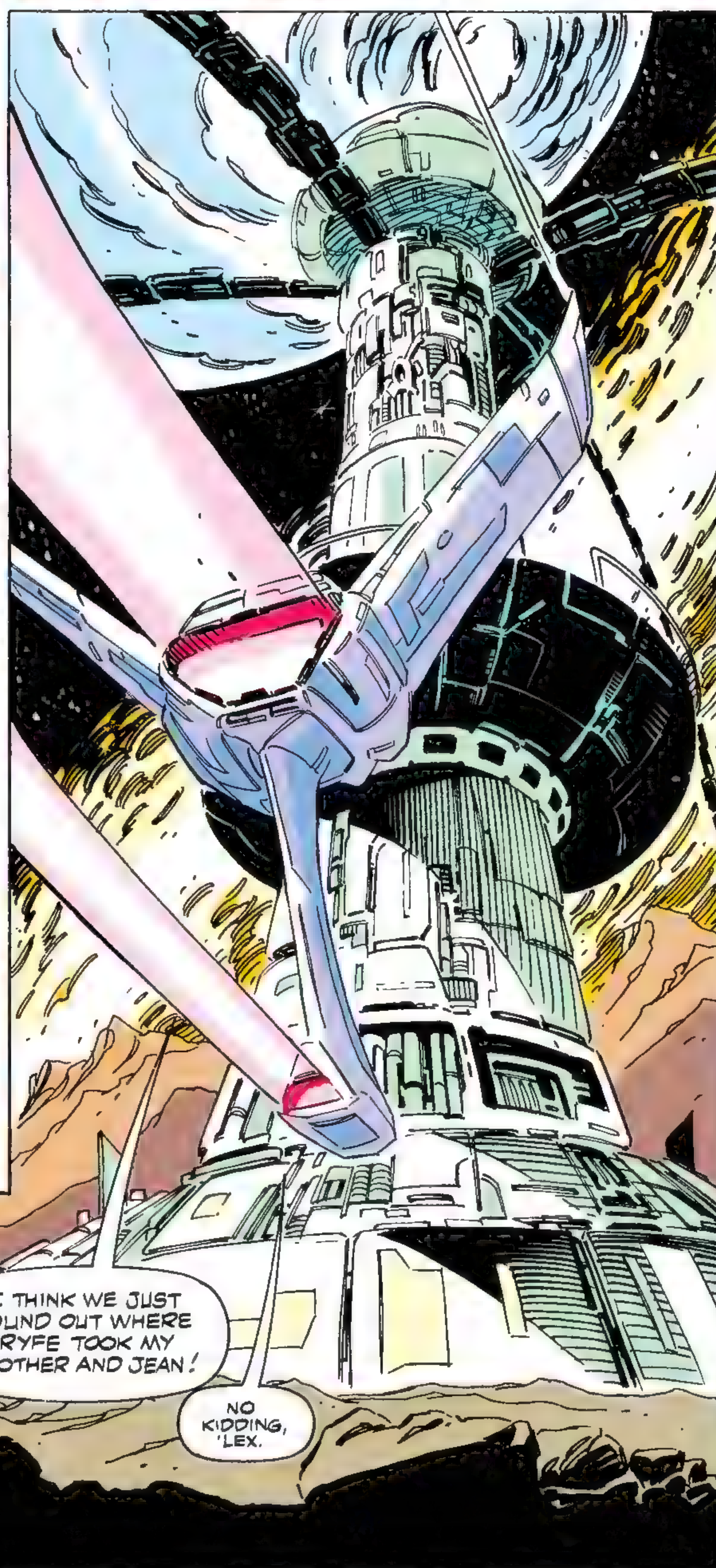
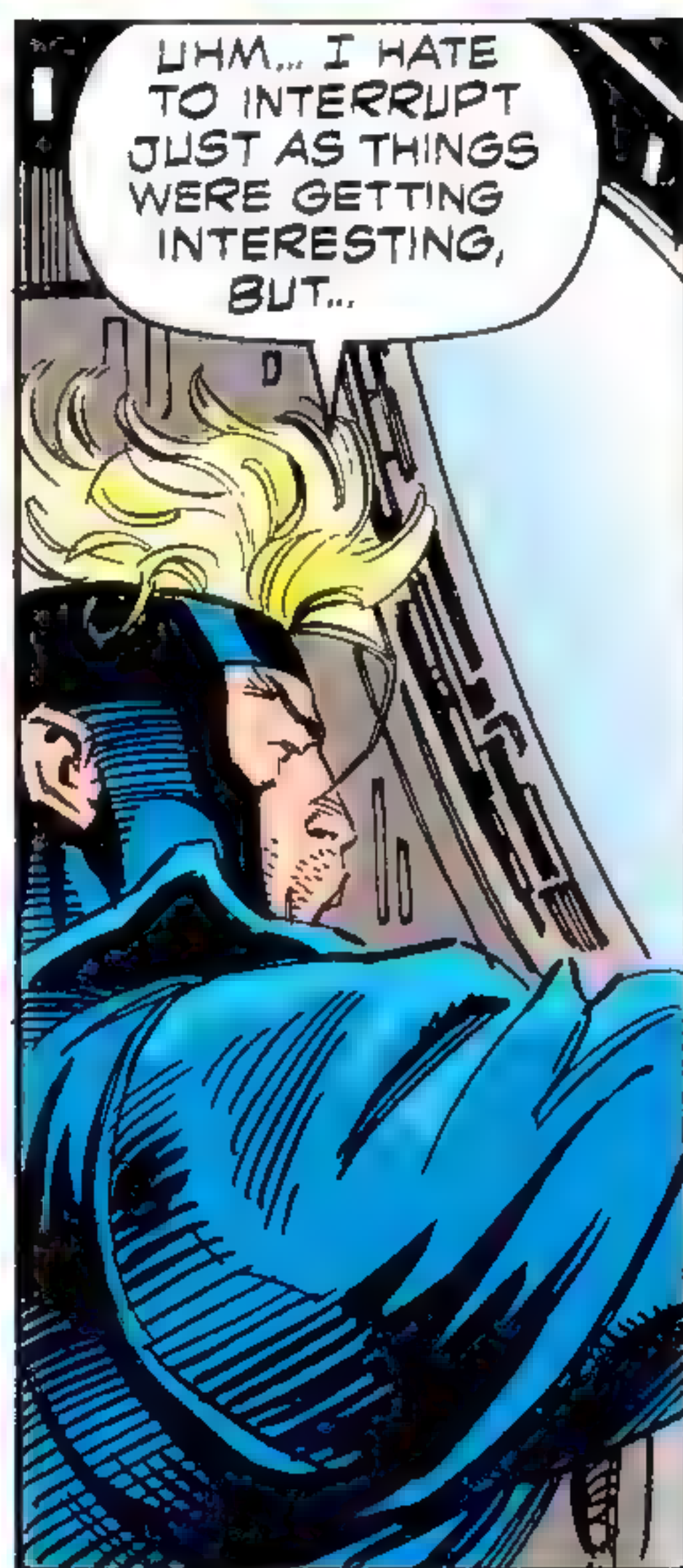
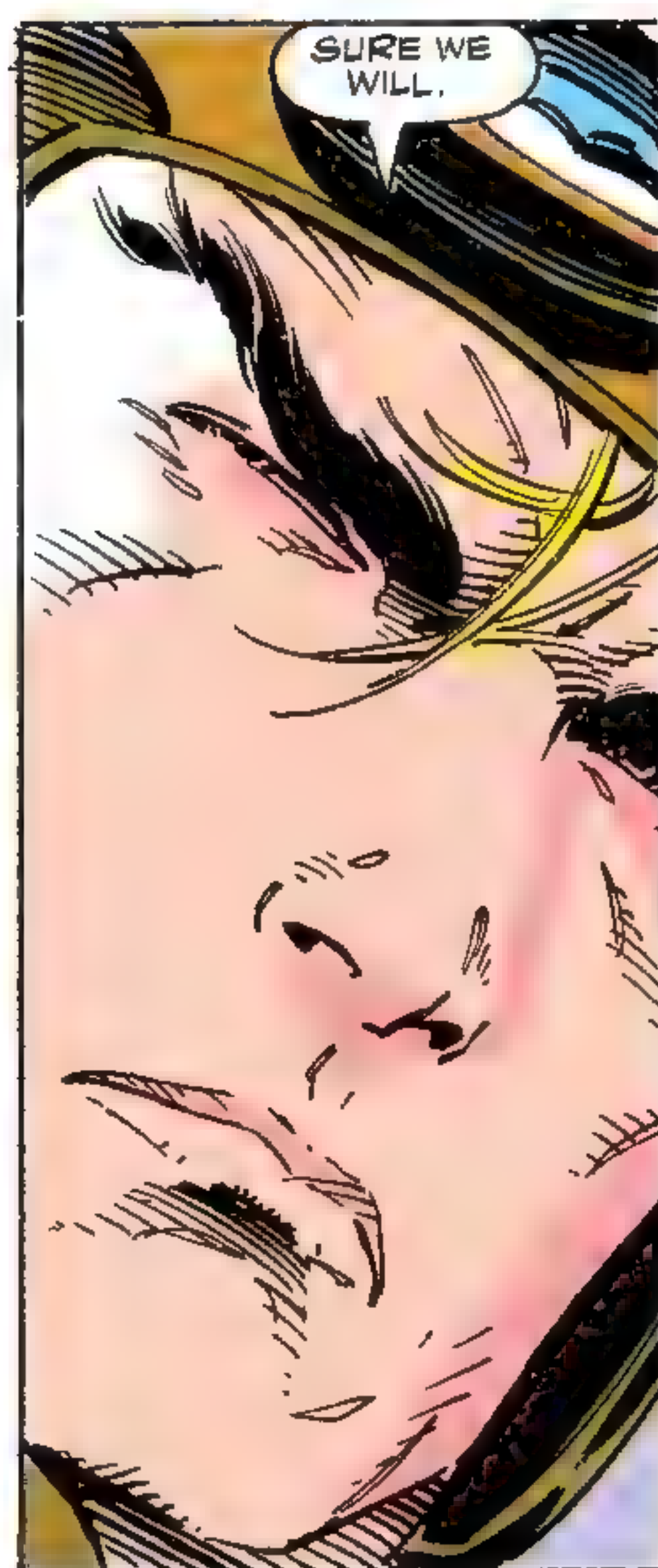
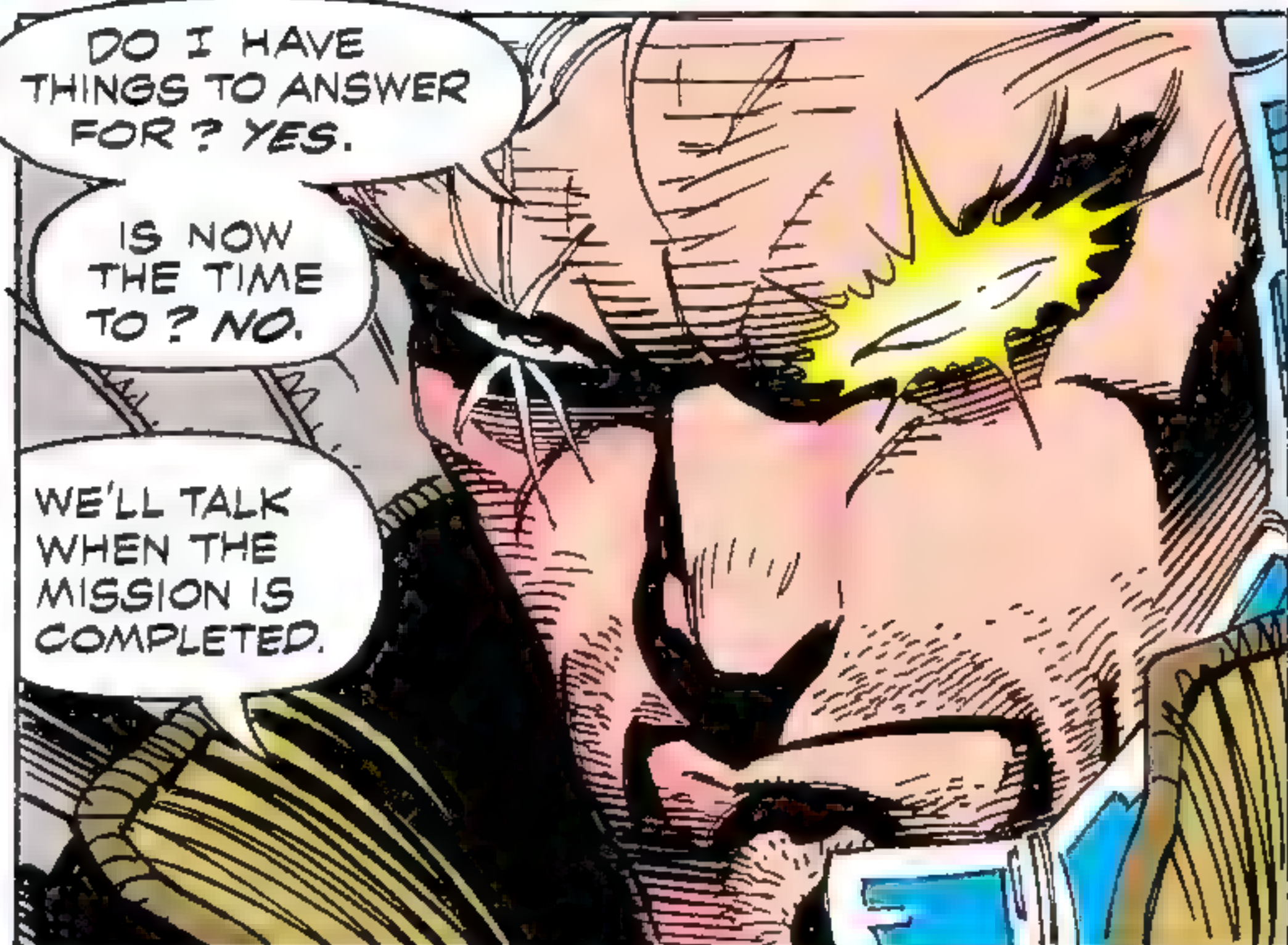
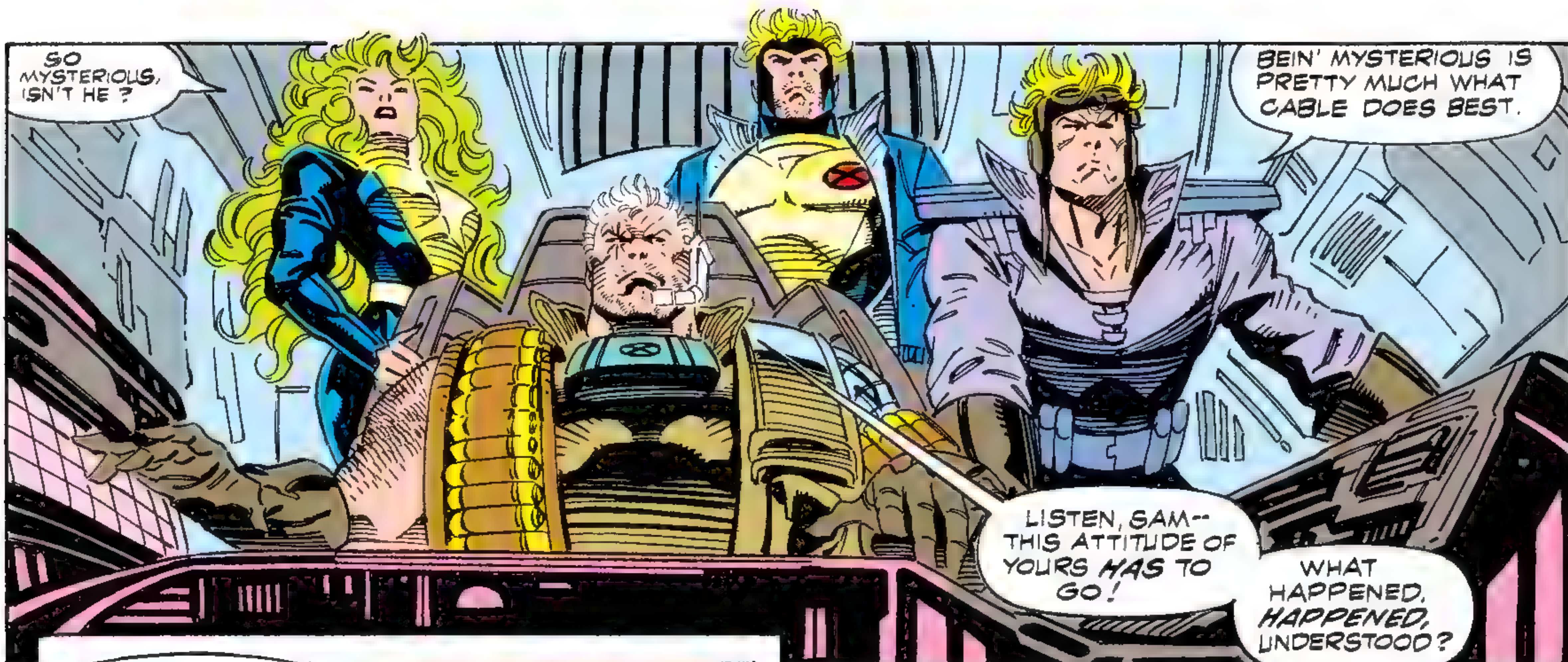


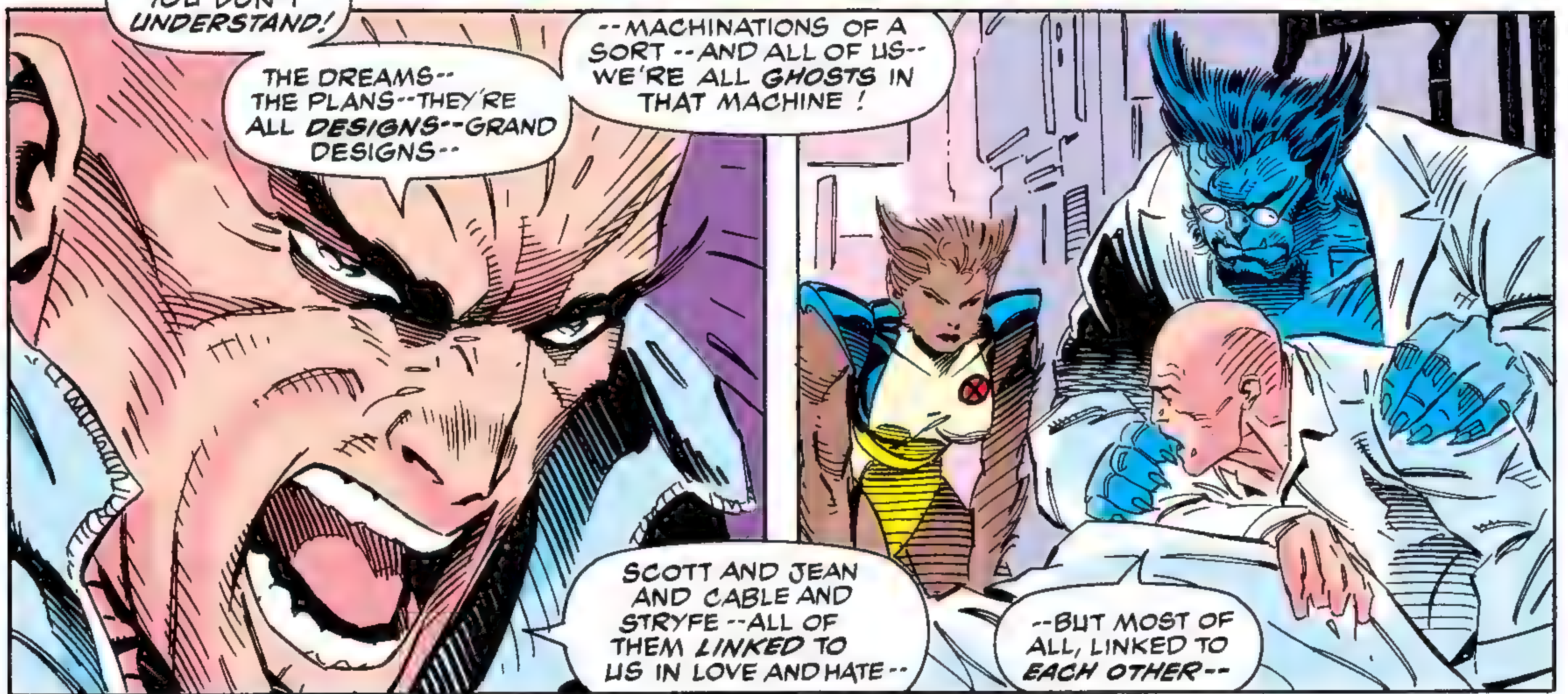
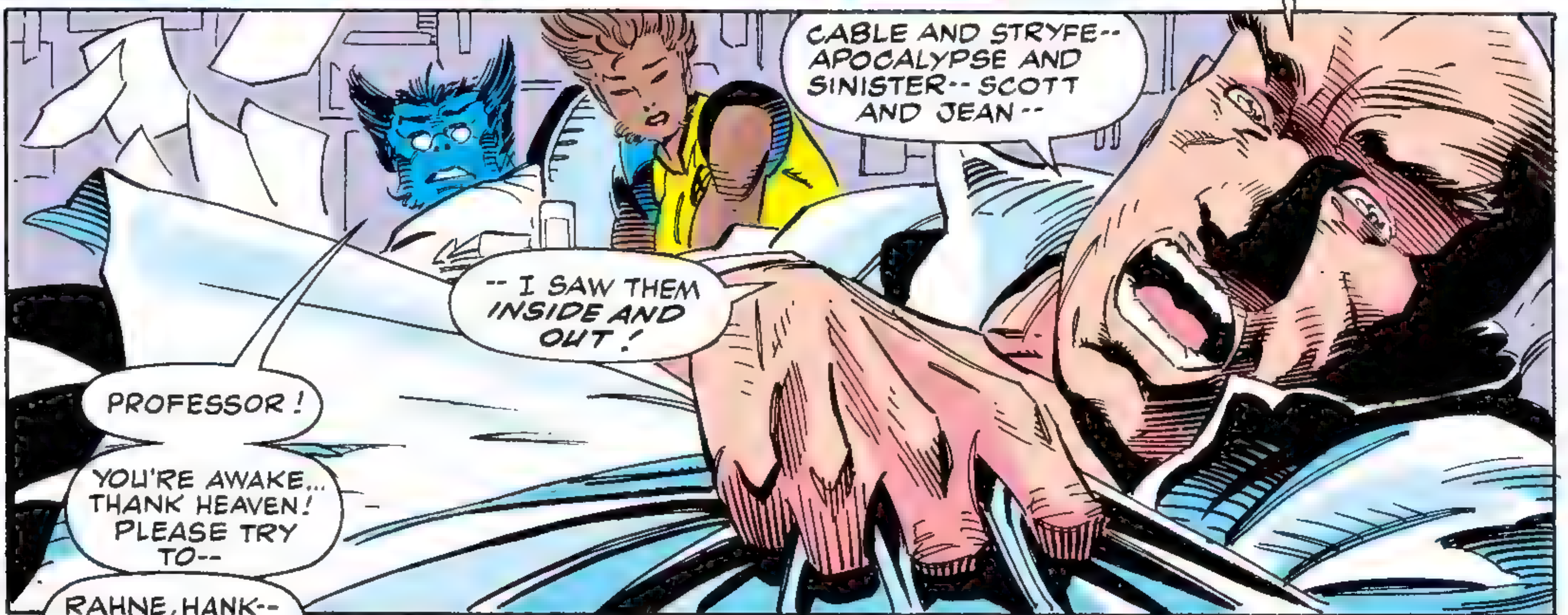
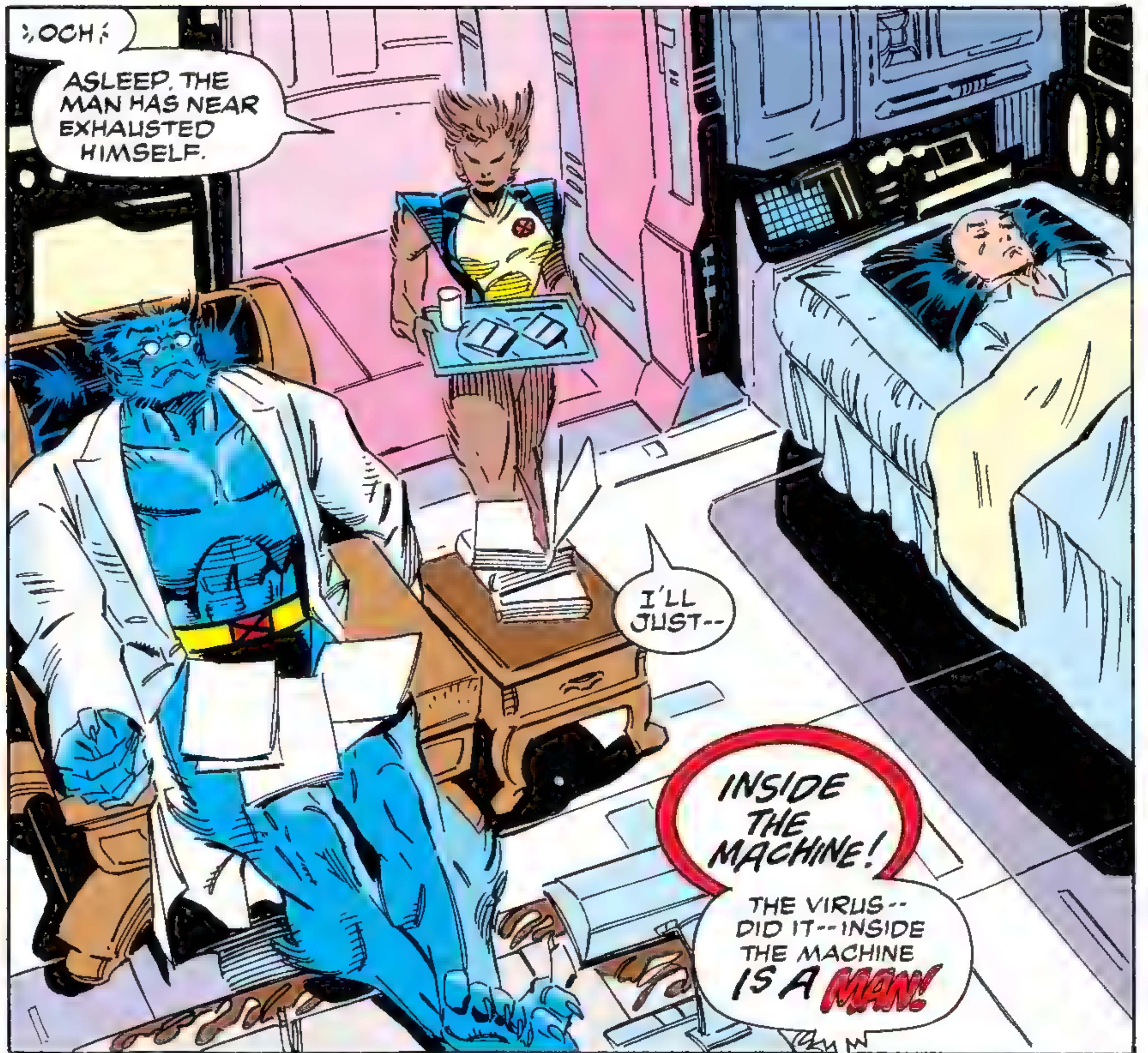
IT WOULD, SAM--
BUT VERY LITTLE
STRYFE HAS DONE
HAS MADE SENSE
TO ME SO FAR.

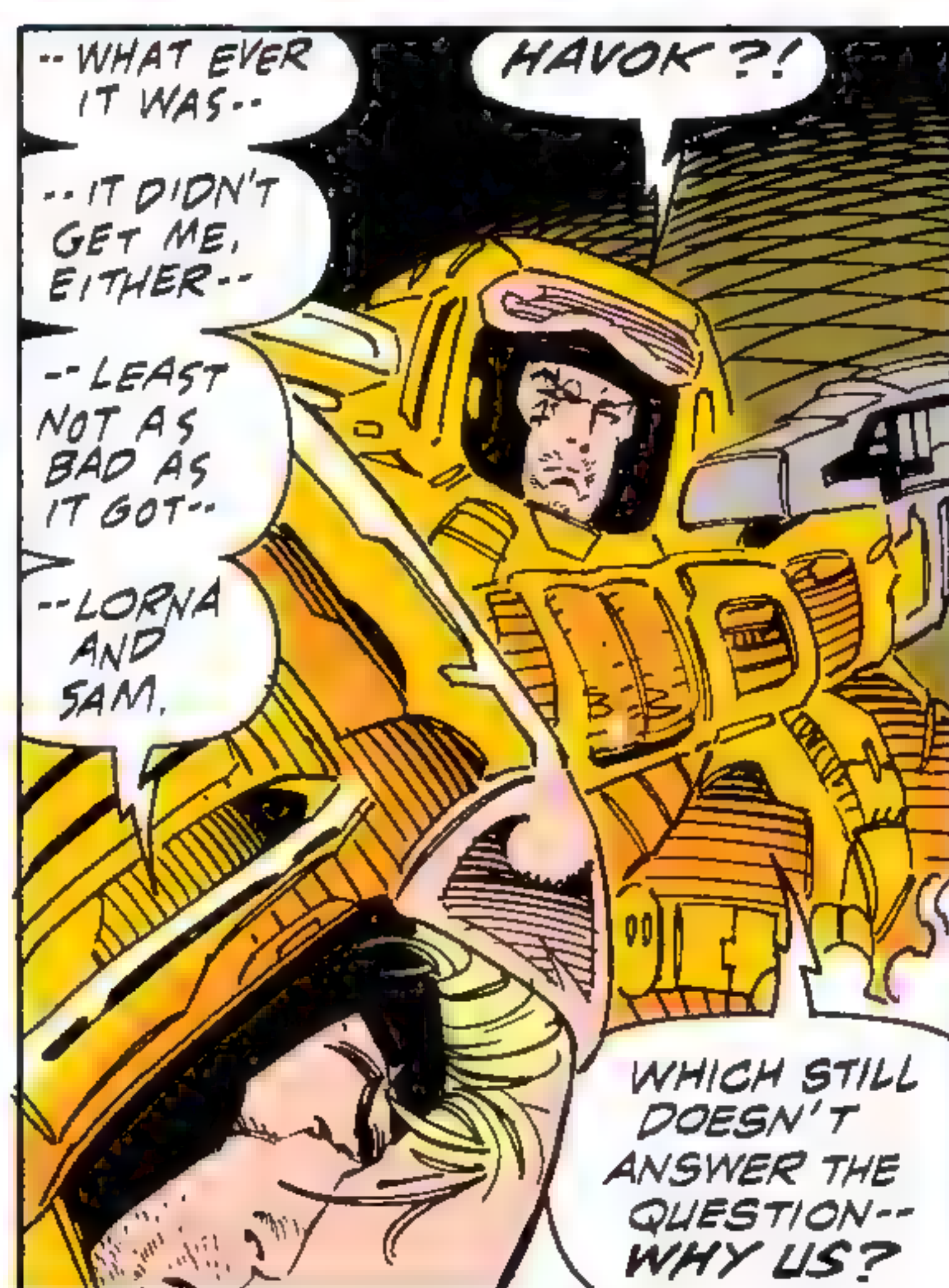
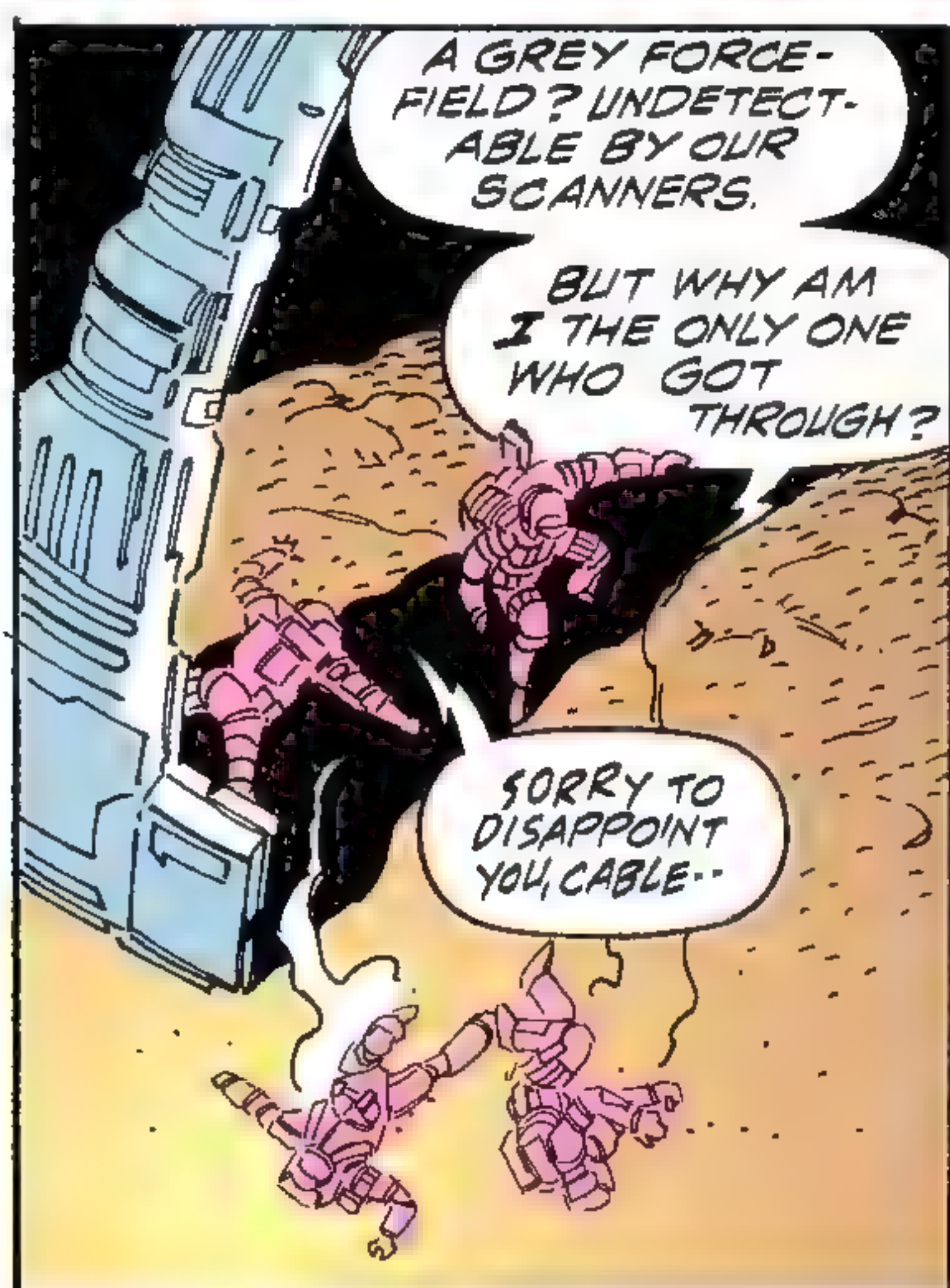
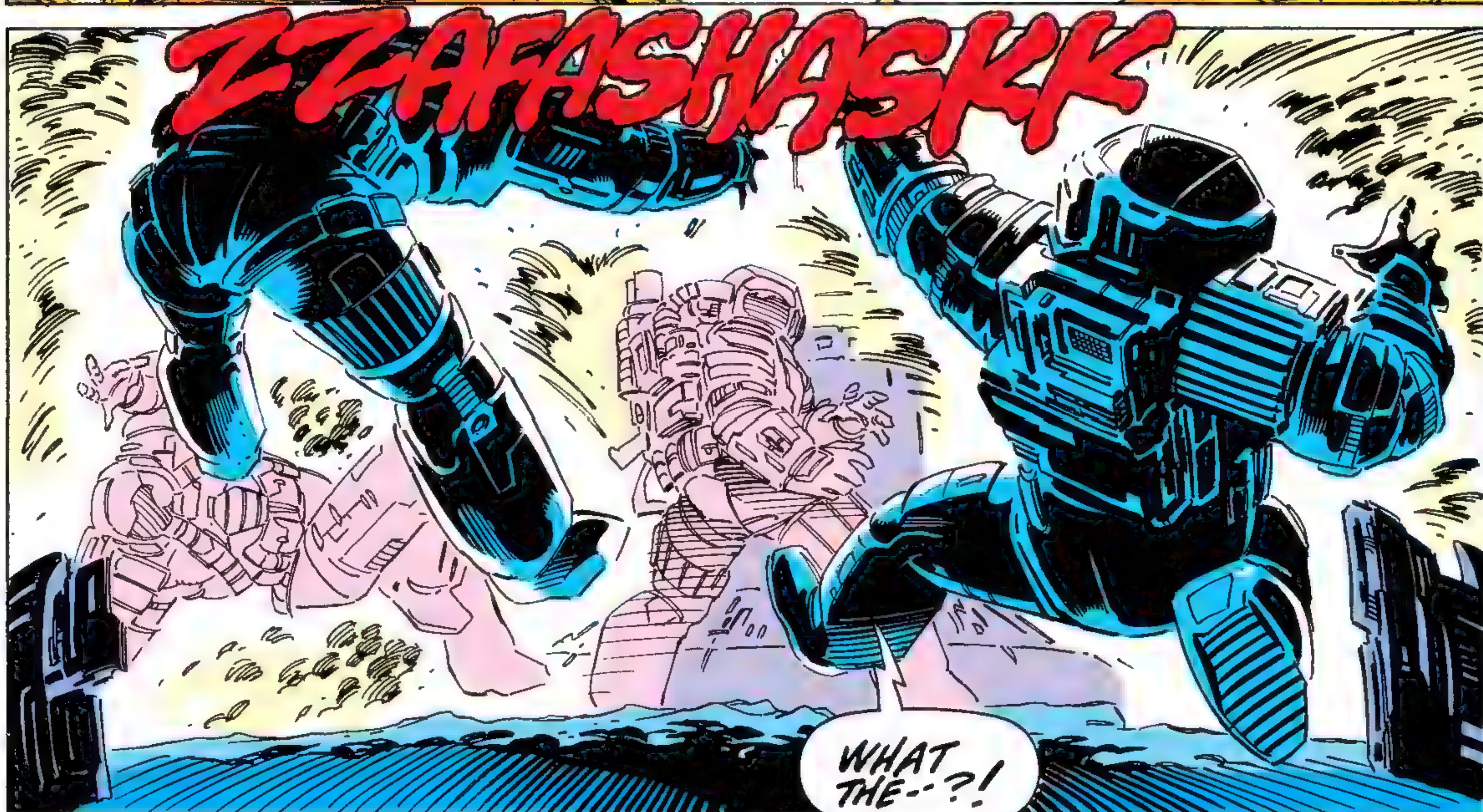
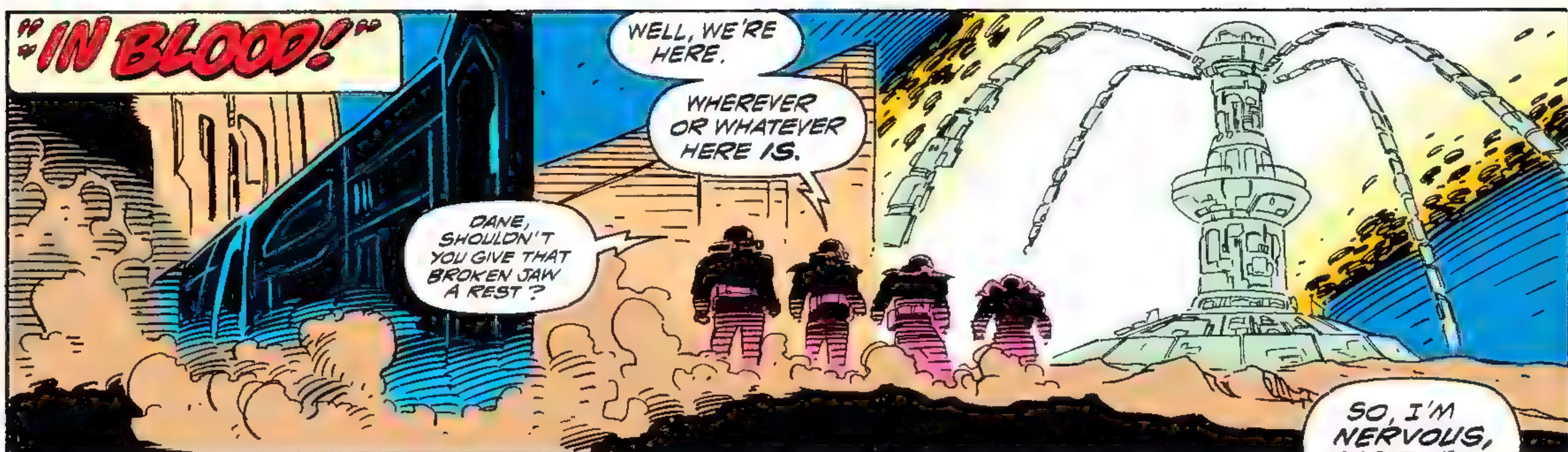
HOW DO YOU
KNOW HOW TO
FLY APOCALYPSE'S
SHIP PRETTY-AS-
YOU-PLEASE ?

I'M ON USER-
FRIENDLY TERMS
WITH THE
TECHNOLOGY IT
WAS DERIVED
FROM.











... I WOULD HAVE
THOUGHT THE ANSWER
TO BE **OBVIOUS**
BY NOW.

AND YOU'VE
ALWAYS SAID
YOU DIDN'T NEED
A **CRYSTAL**
BALL TO PREDICT
IT, HAVEN'T
YOU?

LET US HAVE
A **CHAT**, YOU
AND I, MY
FAILED
BROTHER.

LET US TALK
OF TIME LOST
AND TIME GAINED,
OF TWISTED
FUTURES AND LOST
PASTS. LET US
TALK, NATHAN...

... **OF**
LIFE AND
DEATH!

NEXT WEEK, IN **X-FORCE** #18--

THE CONCLUSION TO **X-CUTIONER'S SONG!**

CABLE VS. STRYFE TO THE **FINISH!**

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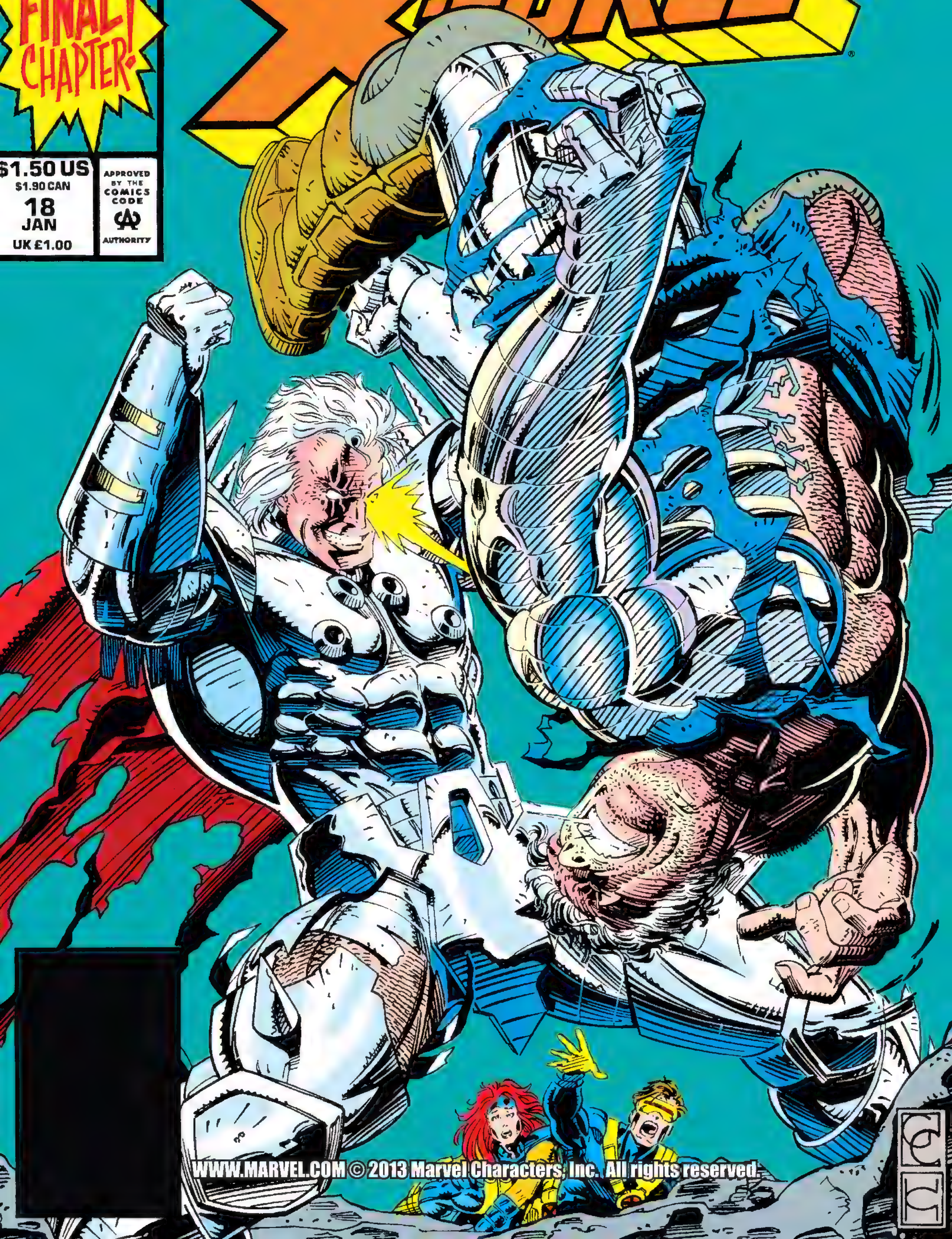
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31

PROFESSOR XAVIER HAS SURVIVED HIS ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT! THE X-SQUADRON HAS ROUTED THE FORCES WHICH HAD TAKEN CONTROL OF APOCALYPSE'S FORMER MOONBASE! AND ON THE LUNAR LANDSCAPE-- CABLE CONFRONTS THE ONE MAN BEHIND THIS BALLAD OF MADNESS--

STRIKE!

TIME'S UP!



FABIAN
NICIEZA
WRITER

GREG
CAPULLO
PENCILER

HARRY
CANDELARIO
INKER

CHRIS
ELIOPOULOS
LETTERER

MARIE
JAVINS
COLORIST

BOB
HARRAS
EDITOR

TOM
DEFALCO
THE FAT LADY

STAN LEE PRESENTS A TALE WHICH
WILL GO DOWN IN THE ANNALS OF
MUTANT HISTORY!

GHOSTS IN THE MACHINE

IS IT REALLY,
NATHAN
DAYSRING
ASKANI'SON?

I HAVE
KILLED THE
ARCHITECT
OF THE
FUTILE
DREAM!

I HAVE HUMLED
THE PARENTS OF
THE TOMORROW
PAIN!

ONLY **YOU**
REMAIN, MY
FAILED BROTHER.

SO AS YOU
CAN SEE--TIME
IS UP--

--AND
DOWN--

--AND INSIDE-
OUT AND
**MINE TO
CONTROL!**

WHICH ALL
MEANS, THAT IF
ANY ONE'S
BORROWED
TIME IS UP--
IT IS YOURS!

I'VE LEARNED
THAT TIME HAS
NEVER
BEEN SOMETHING
WE CAN CONTROL.

NOT APOCALYPSE...
NOT ME... NOT YOU!

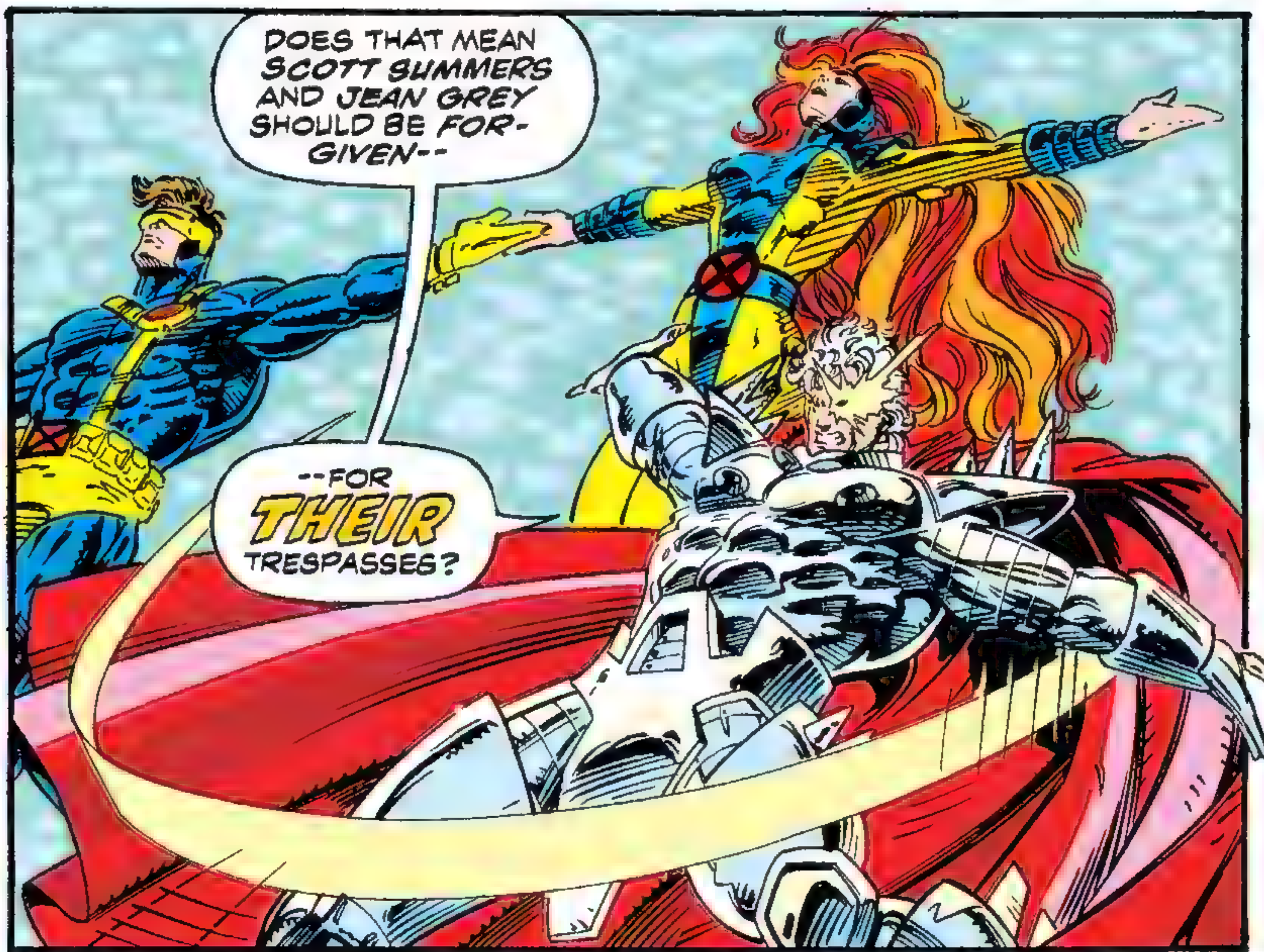
SO IF MY TIME
HAS COME
TODAY, FINE.

BUT I'M TAKING
YOU WITH ME,
STRYFE!

PERHAPS YOU
ARE RIGHT AT
THAT, DAY-
SPRING.

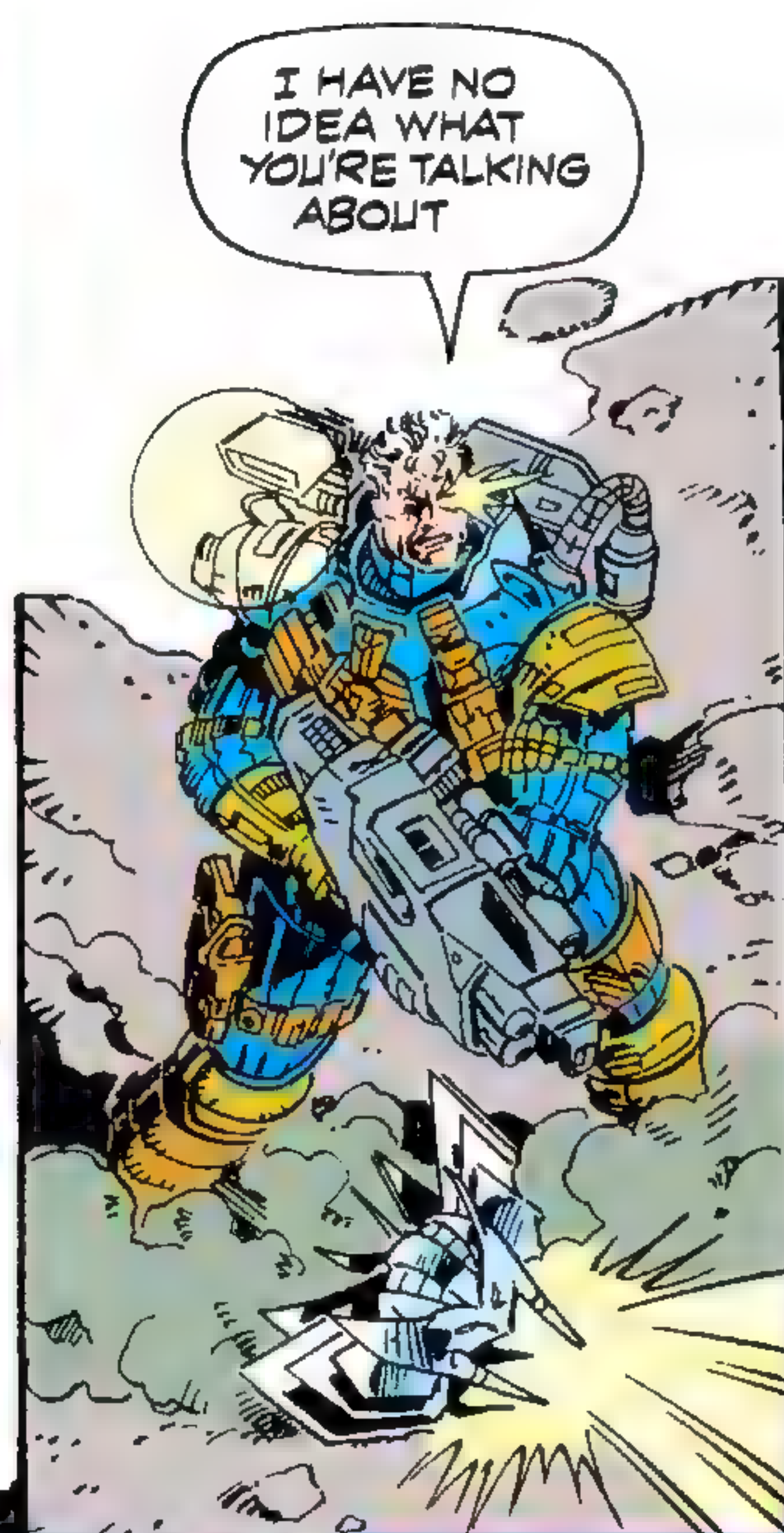
PERHAPS TIME
IS NOT OURS
TO ABUSE.

**CHIN
KLIN**



DOES THAT MEAN
SCOTT SUMMERS
AND JEAN GREY
SHOULD BE FOR-
GIVEN--

--FOR
THEIR
TRESPASSES?



I HAVE NO
IDEA WHAT
YOU'RE TALKING
ABOUT

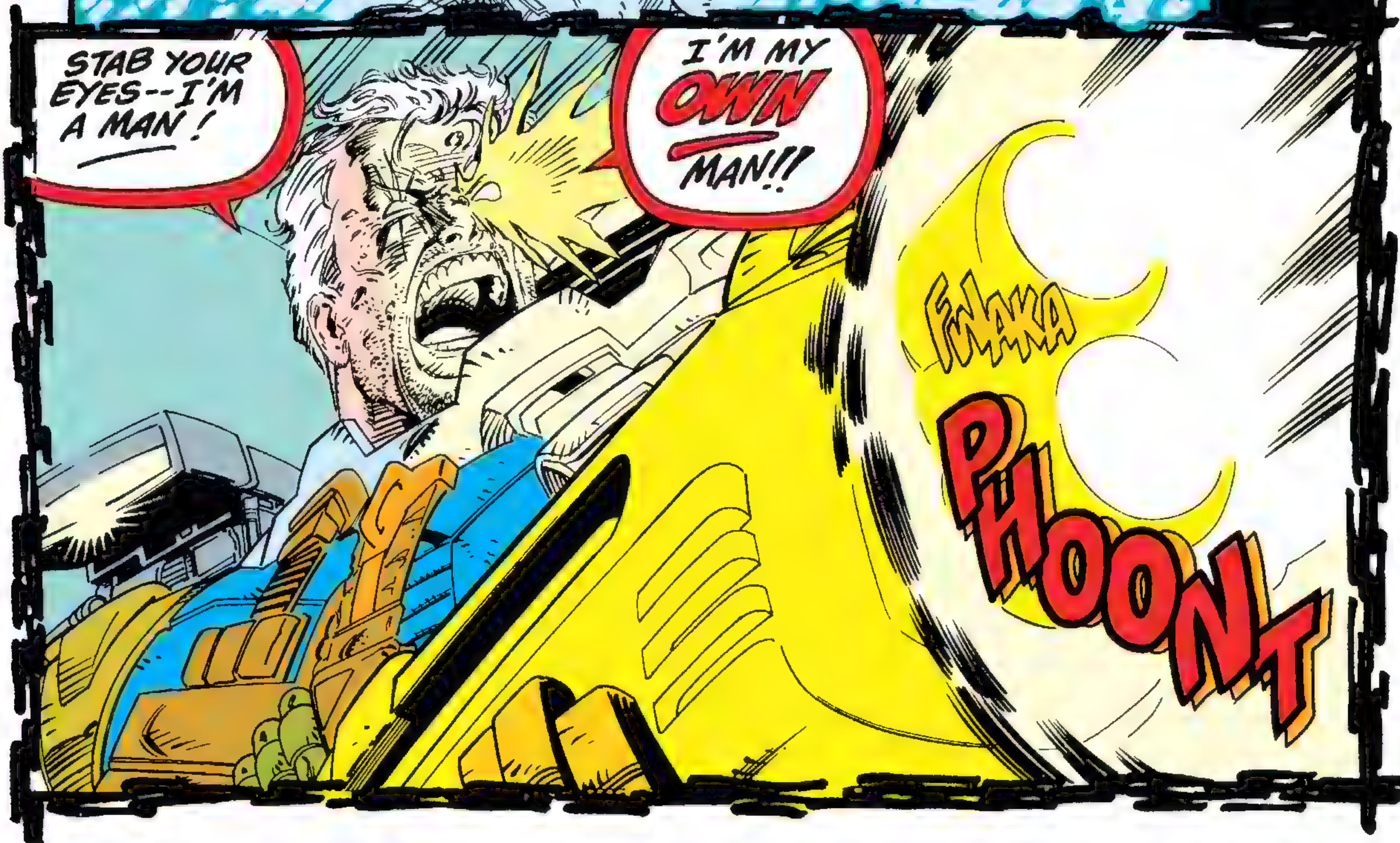


OH, NO ?

MAYBE YOU
DON'T AT
THAT.

AFTER ALL,
YOU ARE NOTHING
MORE THAN A
SCIENTIFIC
ABOMINATION !

A FAILED ATTEMPT
TO PRESERVE A LIFE
WHICH DID NOT EVEN
NEED PRESER-
VING !



STAB YOUR
EYES--I'M
A MAN !

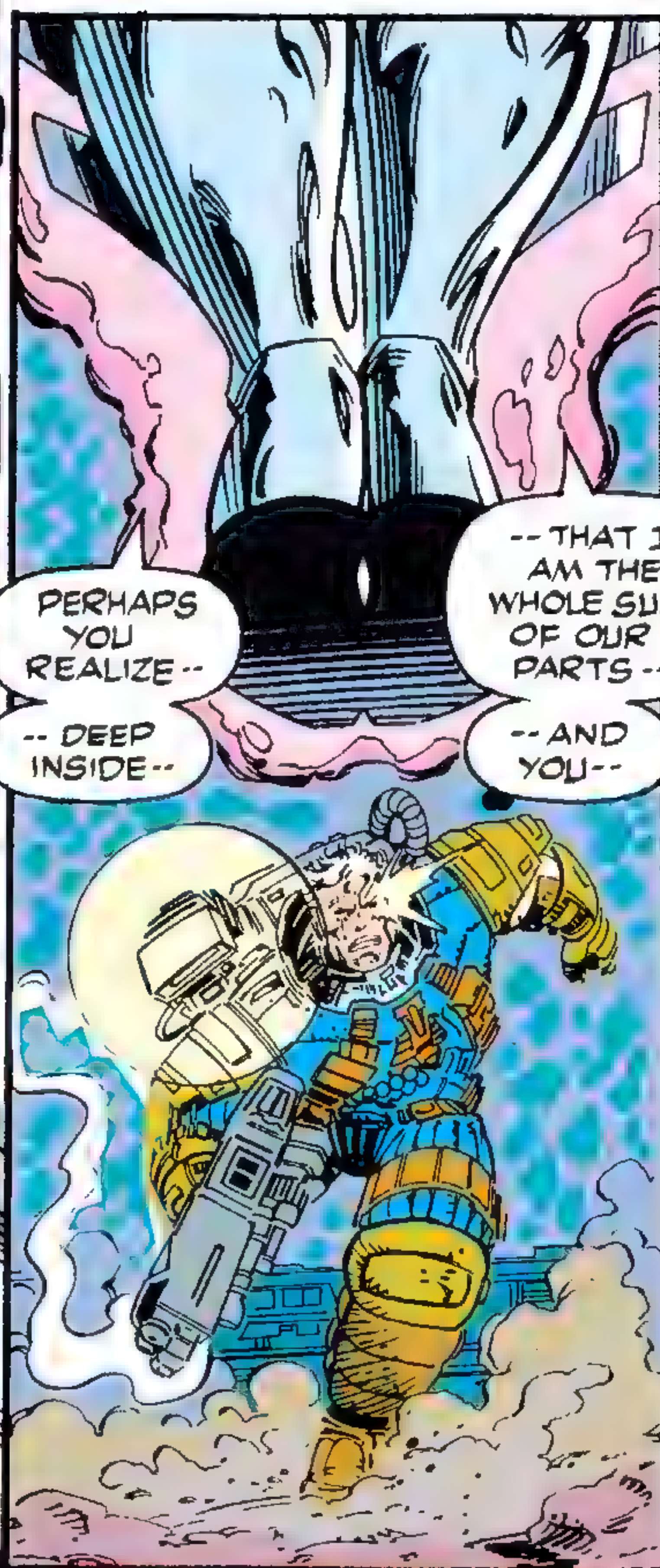
I'M MY
OWN
MAN!!

FWAKA

PHOONT



AH, HAVE I
TOUCHED A
CHORD WITHIN
YOU, DAYSPRING?

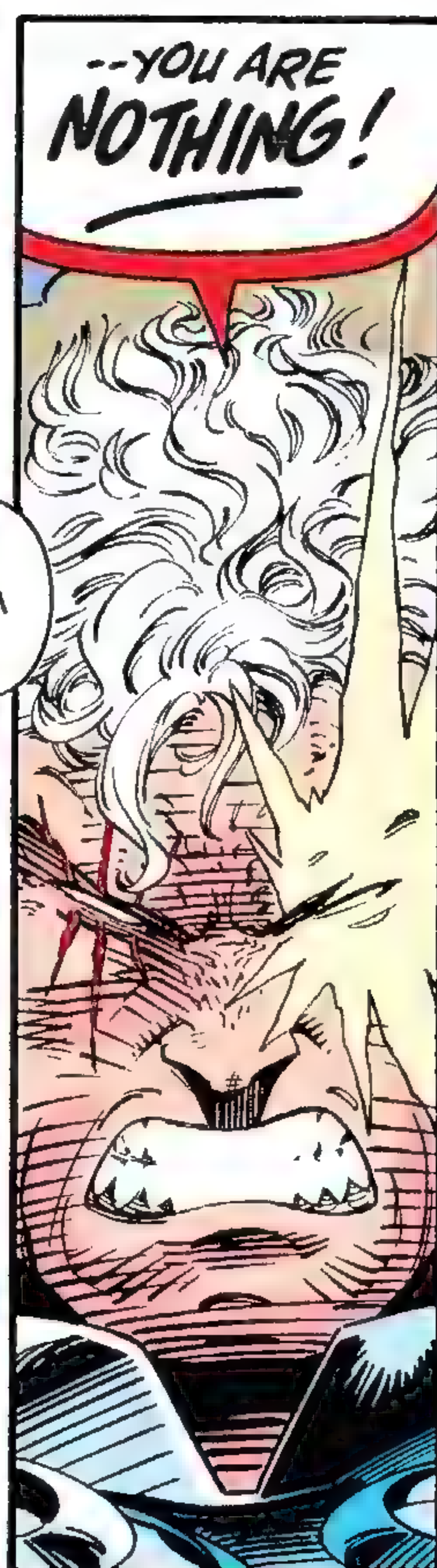


PERHAPS
YOU
REALIZE--

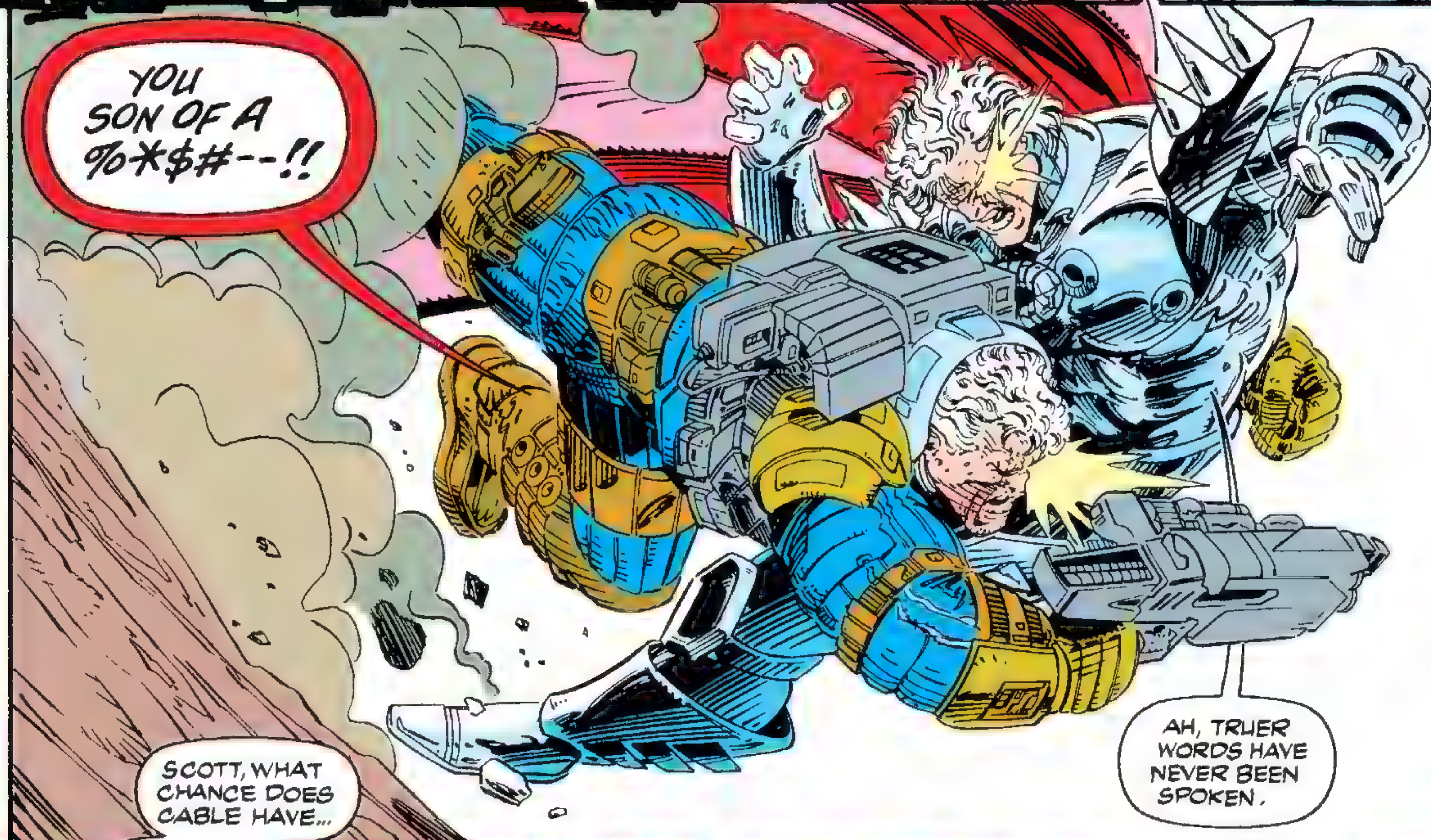
-- DEEP
INSIDE--

-- THAT I
AM THE
WHOLE SUM
OF OUR
PARTS --

-- AND
YOU--



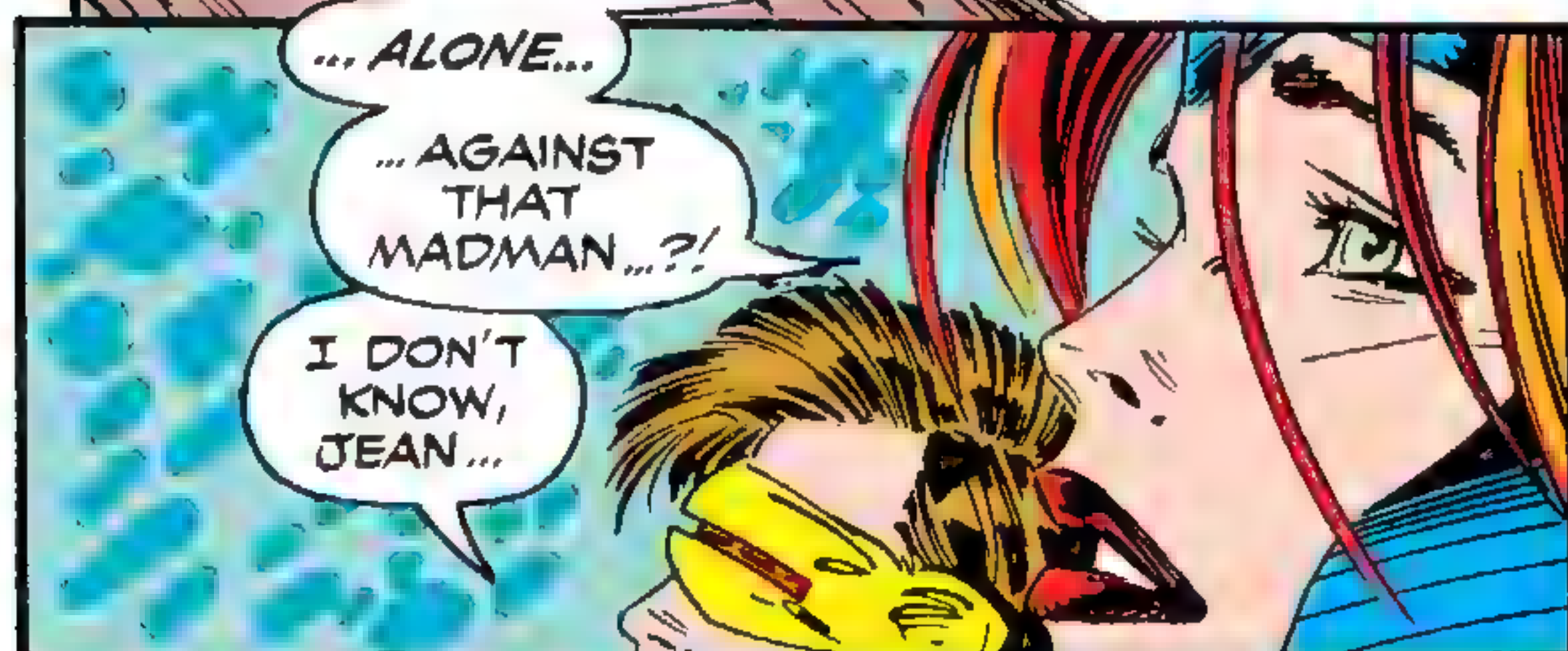
-- YOU ARE
NOTHING!



YOU
SON OF A
%*#\$--!!

SCOTT, WHAT
CHANCE DOES
CABLE HAVE...

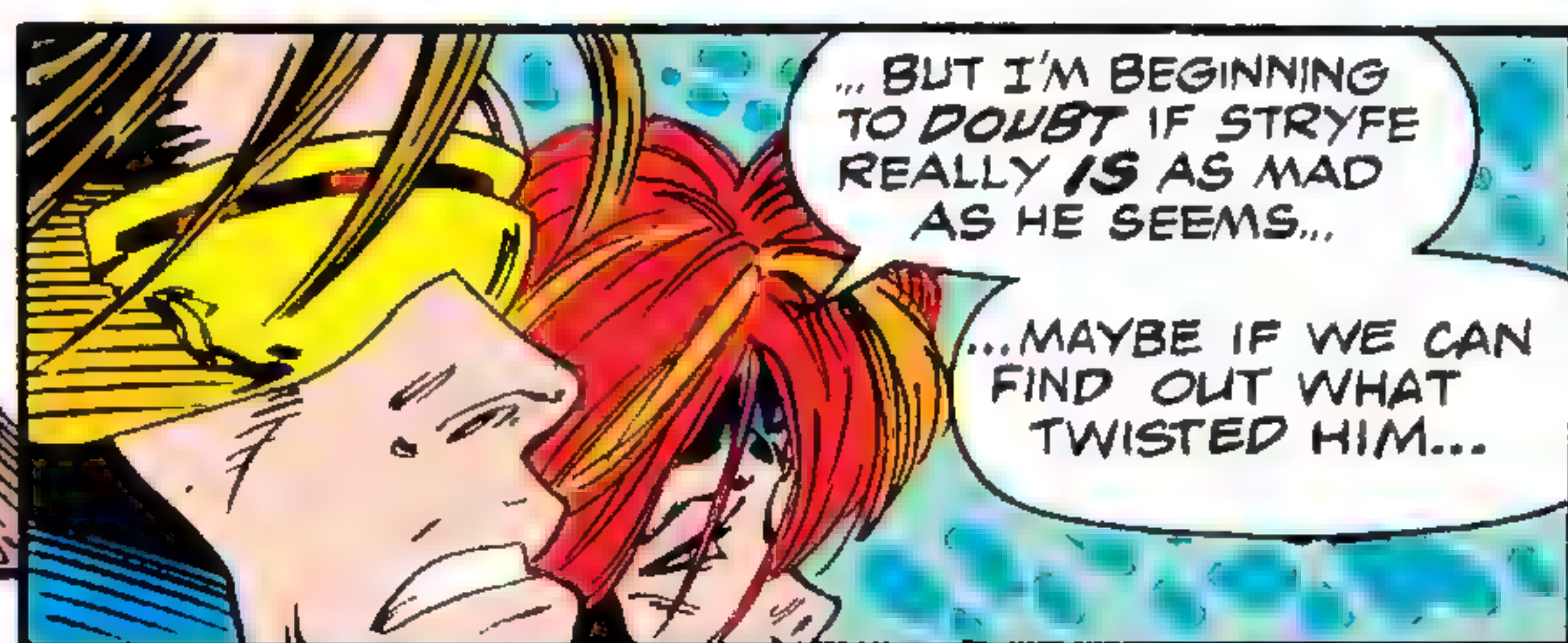
AH, TRUER
WORDS HAVE
NEVER BEEN
SPOKEN.



... ALONE...

... AGAINST
THAT
MADMAN...?!

I DON'T
KNOW,
JEAN...



... BUT I'M BEGINNING
TO DOUBT IF STRYFE
REALLY IS AS MAD
AS HE SEEMS...

... MAYBE IF WE CAN
FIND OUT WHAT
TWISTED HIM...

"...WE CAN END THIS MADNESS."

MILES AWAY, WITHIN THE DRYDOCK FACILITY OF THE MOONBASE, A SPACE CRAFT SOARS AWAY--

--AS BELOW, THE X-MEN STORM, WOLVERINE AND PSYLOCKE MAKE A PAINFULLY OBVIOUS OBSERVATION...

WE ARE TOO LATE. THE DARK RIDERS HAVE EFFECTED THEIR ESCAPE IN THAT STAR SHUTTLE.

TWO GROUPS OF X-MEN AFTER 'EM AN' WE COULDN'T STOP 'EM?

WE'VE BEEN ONE STEP BEHIND FOR TOO LONG, ORORO!

STRYFE, CHARLIE-- SHIVA, MARIKO--

--I'M SICK OF IT!

LOGAN-- MY FRIEND-- I UNDERSTAND, BUT WE MUST ACCEPT WHAT IS DONE... FOR NOW.

ELISABETH, APOCALYPSE WAS IN SOLE PURSUIT OF THE RIDERS. WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HIM?

I'M SCANNING FOR HIM NOW.

I CAN BARELY PERCEIVE HIS THOUGHTS.

HE **DID** ENCOUNTER THE DARK RIDERS-- AND IN HIS WEAKENED CONDITION-- HE WAS OVERWHELMED... NO...

LOGAN, ORORO--

--APOCALYPSE IS DYING!

ELSEWHERE IN THE EXPANSIVE MOON-BASE, ARCHANGEL, BISHOP AND ICEMAN CONTINUE THEIR SEARCH FOR THE DARK RIDERS--

--AS YET UNAWARE THEIR PREY HAVE MADE GOOD ON THEIR ESCAPE !

SOMEWHERE IN THIS INFERNAL FACILITY THERE MUST BE A TELEPORTATION CHAMBER !

IF THE OTHERS SUCCESSFULLY POSITIONED THEMSELVES IN THE DRYDOCK BAY--

--WE SHOULD HAVE THE RIDERS COMFORTABLY TRAPPED !

I WOULD NOT COUNT ON THAT, BISHOP.

WE'RE AT THE SPACE-DOCK NOW...

... AND WE HAVE JUST WATCHED THE RIDERS MAKE THEIR GETAWAY.

AND APOCALYPSE-- ?

SOMEWHERE IN THE FACILITY... ON THE BRINK OF DEATH.

WE'RE PREPPING A SKIMMER CRAFT TO RESCUE SCOTT --

--AND THE OTHERS.

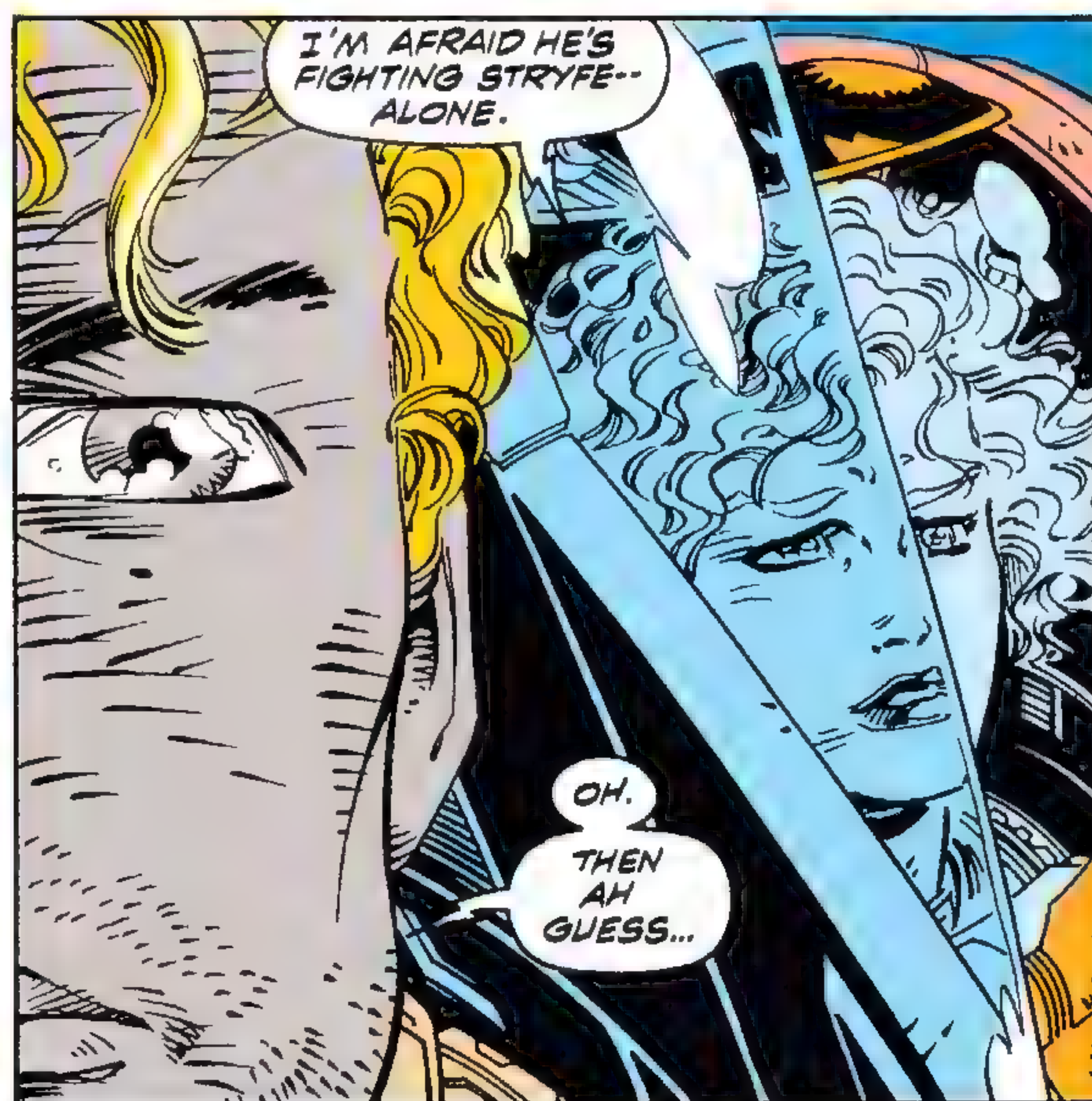
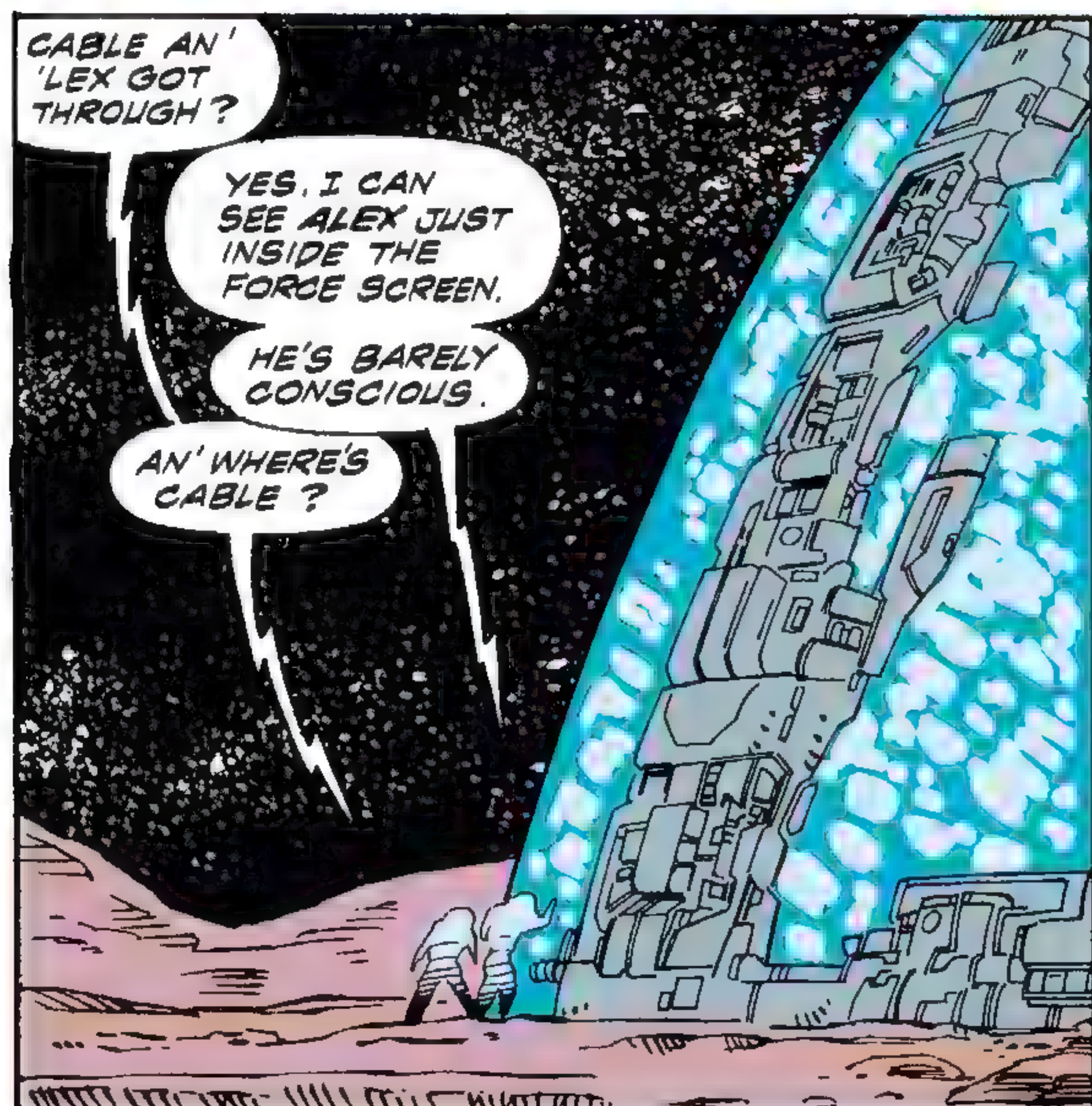
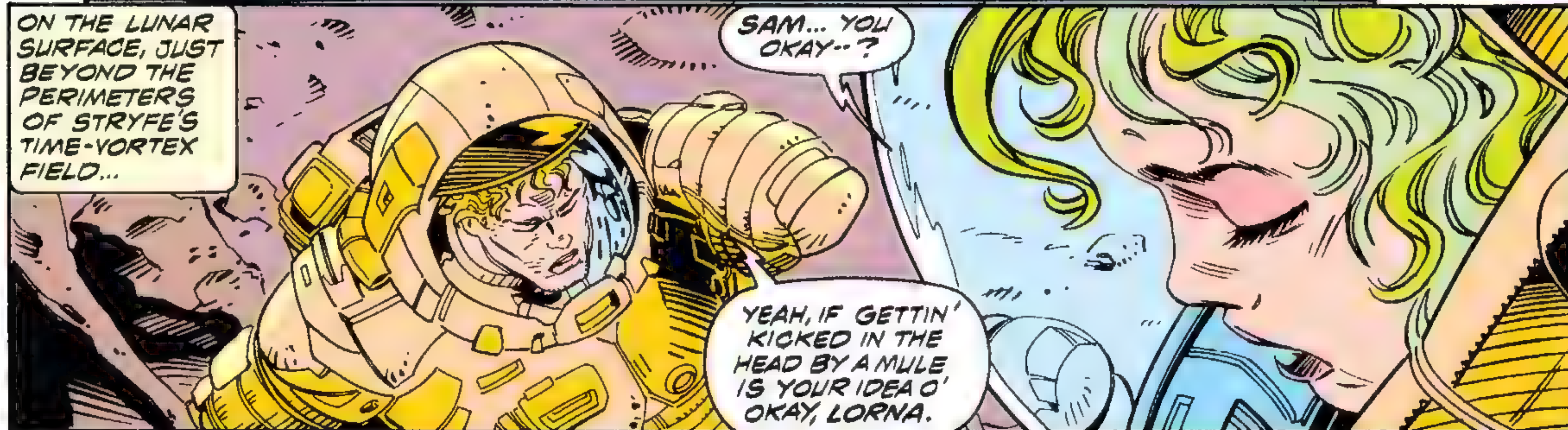
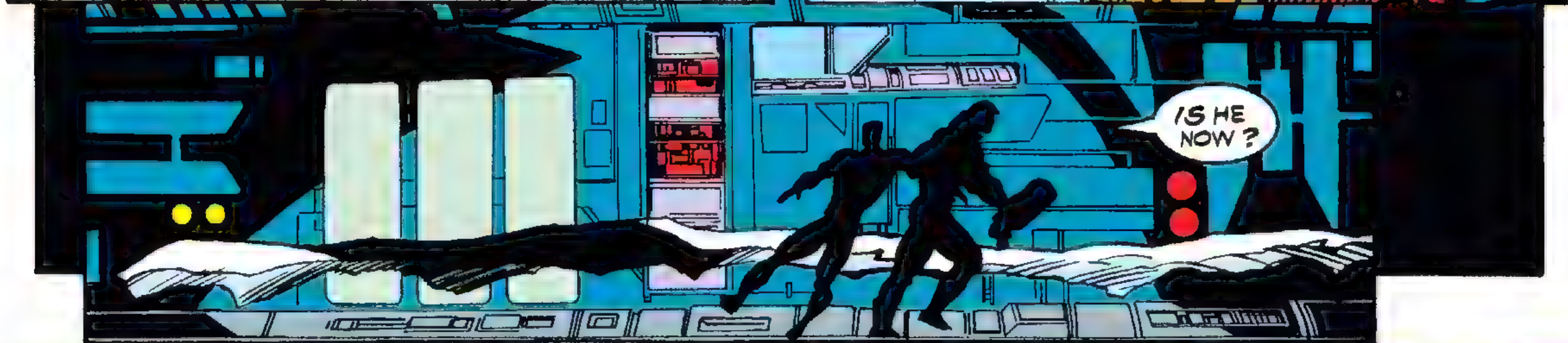
WE'LL BE RIGHT THERE, BETTS.

YOU TWO GO.

HUH ? WHAT ABOUT YOU, WARREN ?

I CAN SMELL APOCALYPSE'S BLOOD.

I HAVE TO FIND HIM...



"... HE'S AS
GOOD AS
DEAD."

AWAY
FROM ME,
HALF-
LIFE!!

FWOON

I HAVE WATCHED
YOU THROUGHOUT
OUR LIVES WITH AN
ALMOST *FRATERNAL*
AMUSEMENT, NATHAN.

AS YOU WENT TO AND
FRO, AS YOU PLAYED
THE PART OF *REBEL*
SAVIOR IN OUR
TIME--

-- AND MYSTERIOUS
RENEGADE MUTANT
BENEFACTOR IN
THIS ONE--

-- I ALWAYS
WONDERED WHAT
FIRES FUELED
YOU--

FWOOSHKT

--IN WAYS
SO *DIFFERENT*
THAN I?

-- WHAT *PASSIONS*
DROVE YOU TO ACT
AS YOU DID--

AND NOW,
AFTER ALL
THIS TIME--
THROUGH
TIME--

--I *FINALLY*
HAVE MY
ANSWER!

YOU HAVE
BEEN STOKED
BY *DESOLA-*
TION!

BY *ISO-*
LATION!

BY
FAILURE!

--NO--



VERY WELL THEN--
-- IF FORCE IS THE TONGUE YOU WISH TO HEAR --
-- THAN LISTEN TO MY TORTURED SOUL!!



XAVIER'S MANSION
IN WESTCHESTER, NEW
YORK.



GEFFZ!

SCARE THE LIVIN'
BEEGEEZUS OUTTA
ME, WHY DON'TCHA?!



PROFESSOR--
IT'S HENRY.

YOUR FEVER
HAS BROKEN,
YOU'RE GOING
TO BE OKAY.

YOU DON'T
UNDERSTAND,
HANK--

-- FOR A BRIEF MOMENT,
IN MY FEVERED STATE--

--I WAS ABLE TO
READ ALL THEIR
MINDS-- THERE
ON THE MOON--
MY X-MEN AND
THE OTHERS--



--AND I SAW ALL
THE MISTAKES
WE'VE MADE --

--MISTAKES BORNE OF
OUR DREAMS AND
NIGHTMARES--

--OF HOPE
AND DESPAIR--

--OF
FATHERS
AND
SONS--



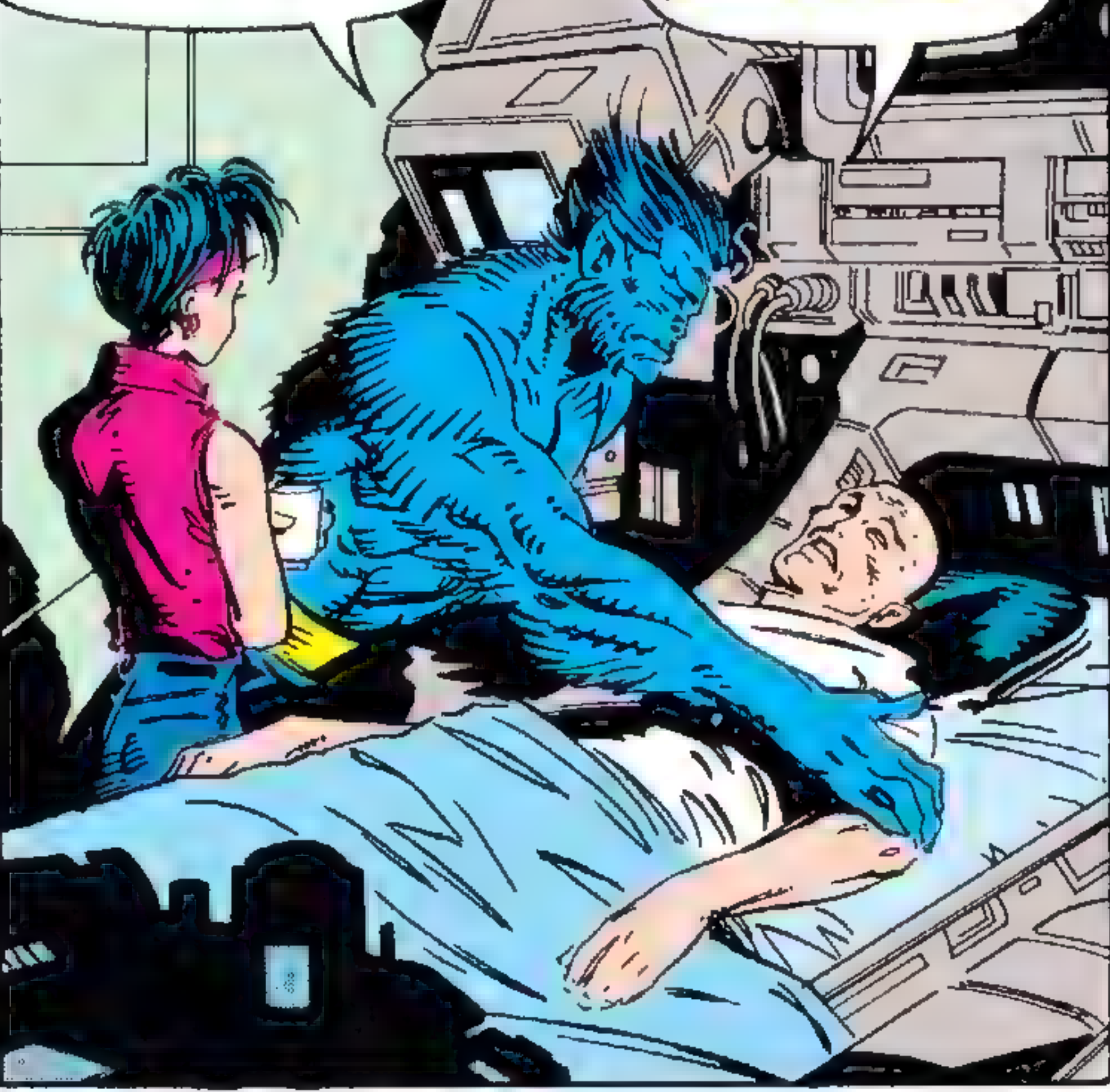
--ALL THESE MISTAKES
ARE WEAVING TOGETHER
UP THERE--TO FORM A
TRAGIC DESTINY--

--AND THERE
IS NOTHING
I CAN DO TO
STOP IT!



EASY NOW, IT'LL
ALL WORK OUT.
DESPITE THE ODDS,
THE X-MEN ALWAYS
PULL THROUGH.

BUT THERE IS
ALWAYS A COST--
ALWAYS--



--AND WHAT
IF **THIS**
TIME--



--THE COST IS
SCOTT AND
JEAN'S LIFE--?!

BEAUSE **THAT**
IS WHAT IT IS
GOING TO COME
DOWN TO, HANK!

HEAVEN HELP US
ALL -- THAT IS
THE **ONLY**
THING WHICH WILL
END THIS INSANITY!

INSIDE THE
MOONBASE...

MATTERS OF
LIFE AND DEATH
CONTINUE TO
BE SETTLED.

HAUFF

WELL
DONE

HAAHKK

WELL
FOUGHT

SO I
DIE

FNUGH

AS I
HAVE
LIVED

AS MY "FATHER"
MADE ME,
APOCALYPSE.

LIVING TO
DIE, DYING TO
LIVE.

DOES THAT
LEAVE ME TO
FOLLOW YOUR
EXAMPLE?

THUNK

MY
SON--?

YOU DON'T
HAVE MUCH
TIME LEFT.

NO--

HWAURGHHUGHEE

I--DO
NOT--

YOU ARE
NOT STRONG,
APOCALYPSE.

YOU
ARE NOT
FIT.



IN YOUR WORLD, YOU DON'T ~~DE~~-SERVE TO SURVIVE...

...DO YOU?



YOU ARE RIGHT--

-- MY ANGEL OF DEATH--

-- YOU ARE-- AS I MADE YOU--



-- STRONG --

-- A KILLER --

-- A SURVIVOR ...

MAYBE.

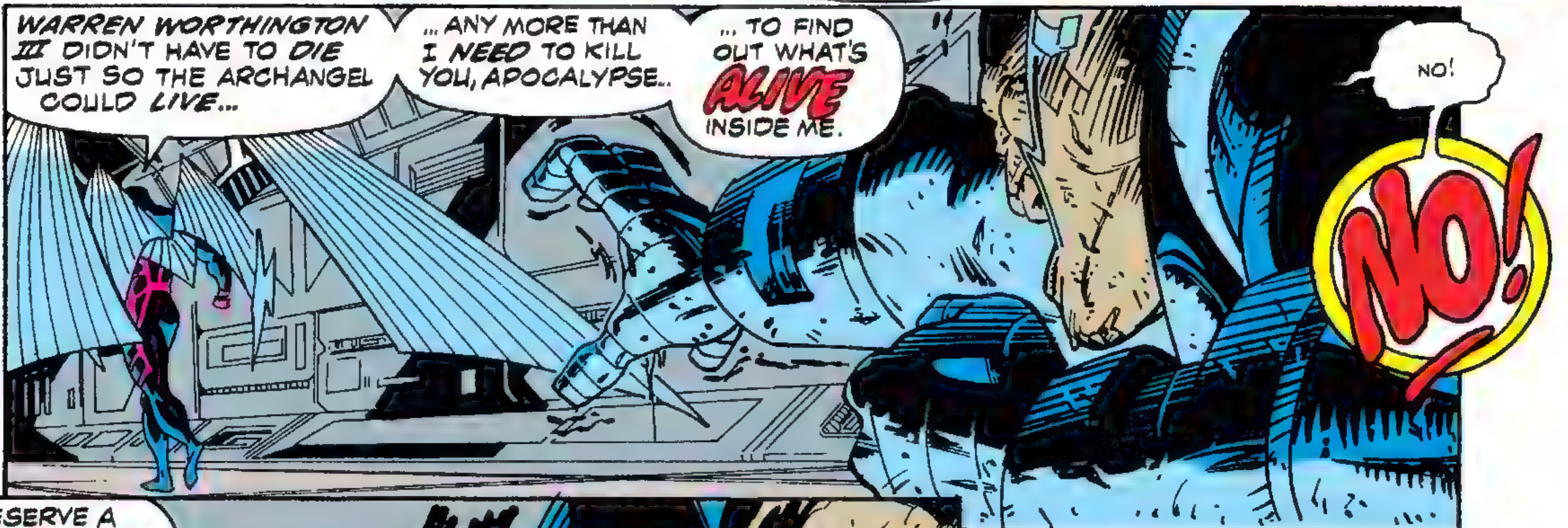
BUT LONG BEFORE I EVER MET YOU ...

... I WAS -- I **AM** A MAN.



YES, YOU ALTERED MY WINGS--DRAPED MY SKIN FOREVER IN SHADOWS...

... BUT YOU COULDN'T CHANGE THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF ME.



WARREN WORTHINGTON III DIDN'T HAVE TO DIE JUST SO THE ARCHANGEL COULD LIVE...

... ANY MORE THAN I NEED TO KILL YOU, APOCALYPSE...

... TO FIND OUT WHAT'S **ALIVE** INSIDE ME.

NO!

NO!



I DESERVE A **CLEAN DEATH!**

I DESERVE TO DIE AS I LIVED!

A MAN OF STRENGTH--OF COURAGE--OF POWER--

--NOT LIKE THIS--

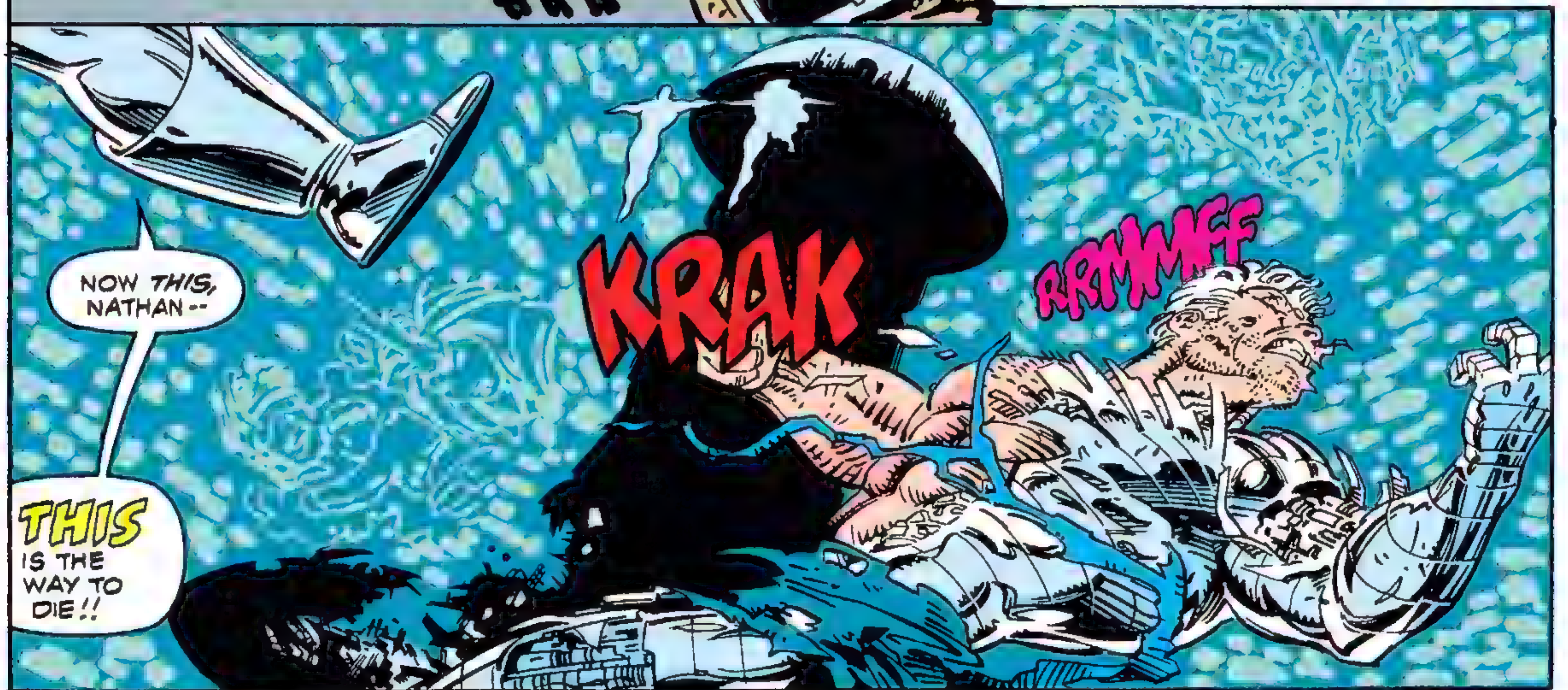
-- NOT ALONE-- ENFEEBLED--

-- SLOWLY EBBING AWAY--

-- AS OTHERS FIGHT AROUND ME--

-- THIS IS NOT THE WAY--

... TO DIE...



NOW THIS, NATHAN--

THIS IS THE WAY TO DIE!!

KRAK

RRMMFF

JEAN, WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING. CABLE CAN'T TAKE MUCH MORE!

I KNOW! THERE IS A POSSIBILITY THE MORE STRYFE CONCENTRATES ON CABLE--

--THE WEAKER OUR TELEKINETIC BONDS BECOME.

IF STRYFE REMAINS OCCUPIED-- AND THAT'S A **BIG** IF--

-- I SHOULD BE ABLE TO BREAK US FREE--

AAAGH--!

FASHAM **MMM**

PLASMA BLAST--? WHO--?

YOU RELISH DEALING IN PAIN, DON'T YOU, STRYFE?

WELL, STOP CRYING FOUL AND JUST CRY **HAVOK!**

AH, MY MISTAKE.

MY GENETIC MATRIX SHIELD WAS PROGRAMMED FOR THE SUMMERS DNA--

-- I HAD NOT CONSIDERED IT WOULD ALLOW THE **BROTHER** THROUGH.

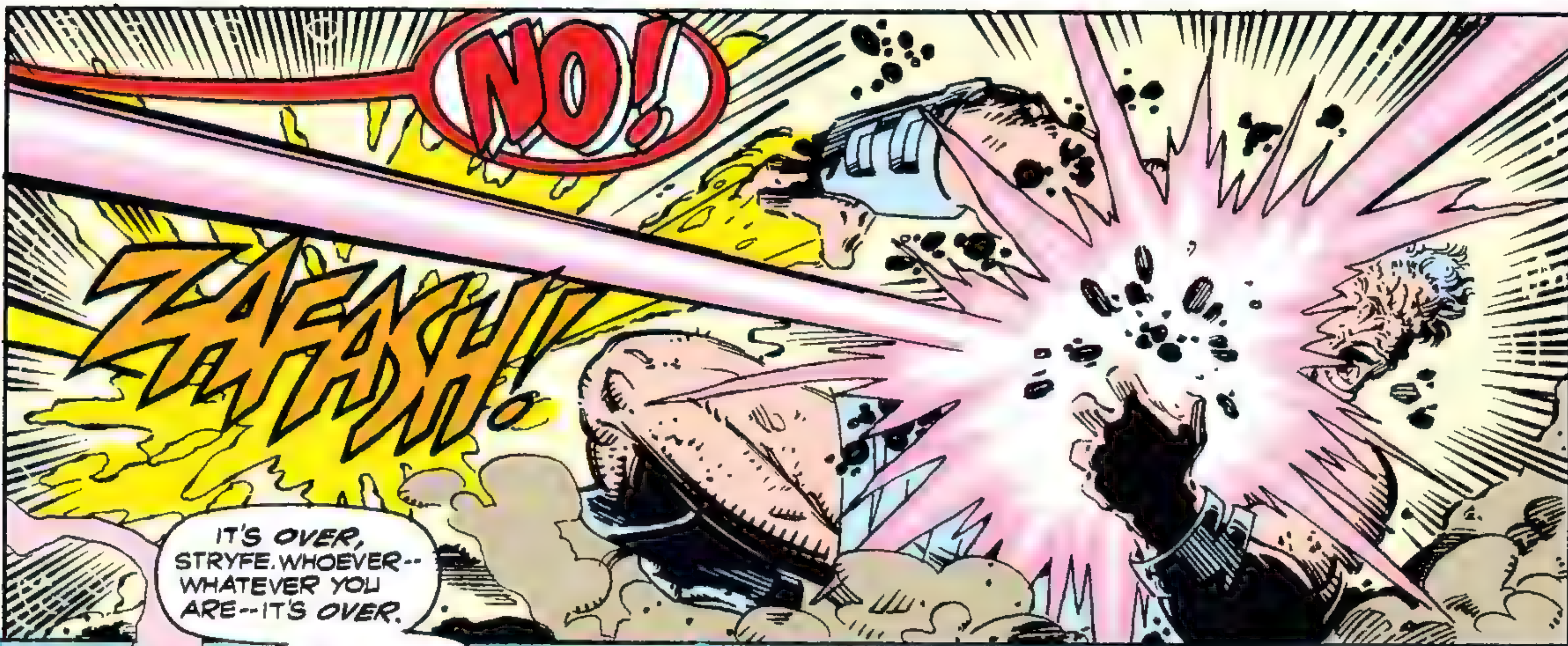
WELL, IT DID-- KICKED ME PRETTY HARD FOR NOT BEING SCOTT--

-- BUT I'VE ALWAYS DONE A GOOD JOB OF THAT MYSELF.

IT WOULD APPEAR THAT **ANYONE** WHO BEARS THE NAME OF SUMMERS MUST **PAY** FOR IT, DOESN'T IT?

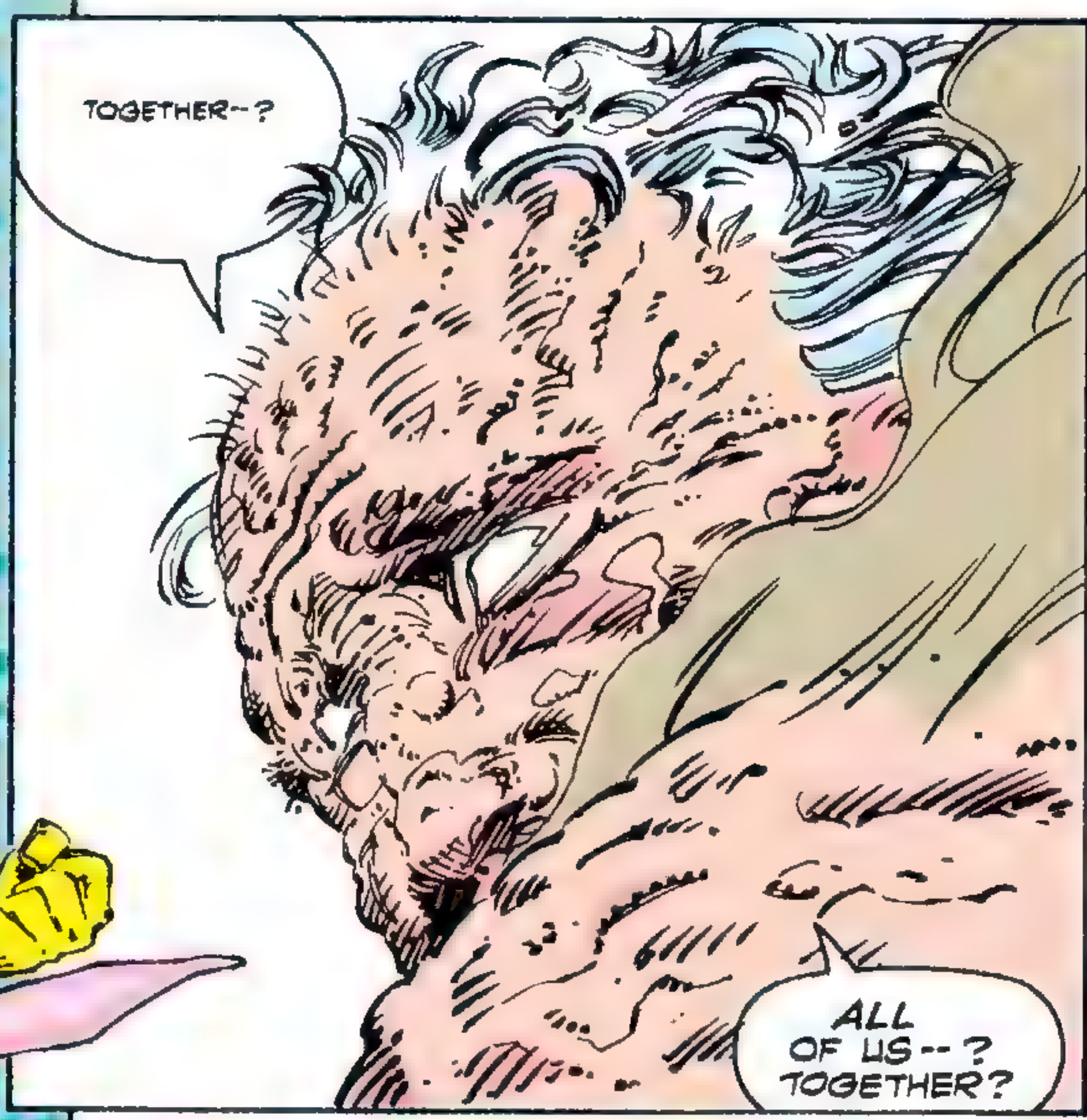
SOME PAY WITH THEIR LIVES...

... YOU, ALEX SUMMERS, WILL PAY WITH YOUR **DEATH!**



IT'S OVER, STRYFE. WHOEVER--
WHATEVER YOU
ARE--IT'S OVER.

IT'S TIME TO
STOP THIS
CYCLE OF
PAIN!



ALL
OF US--?
TOGETHER?

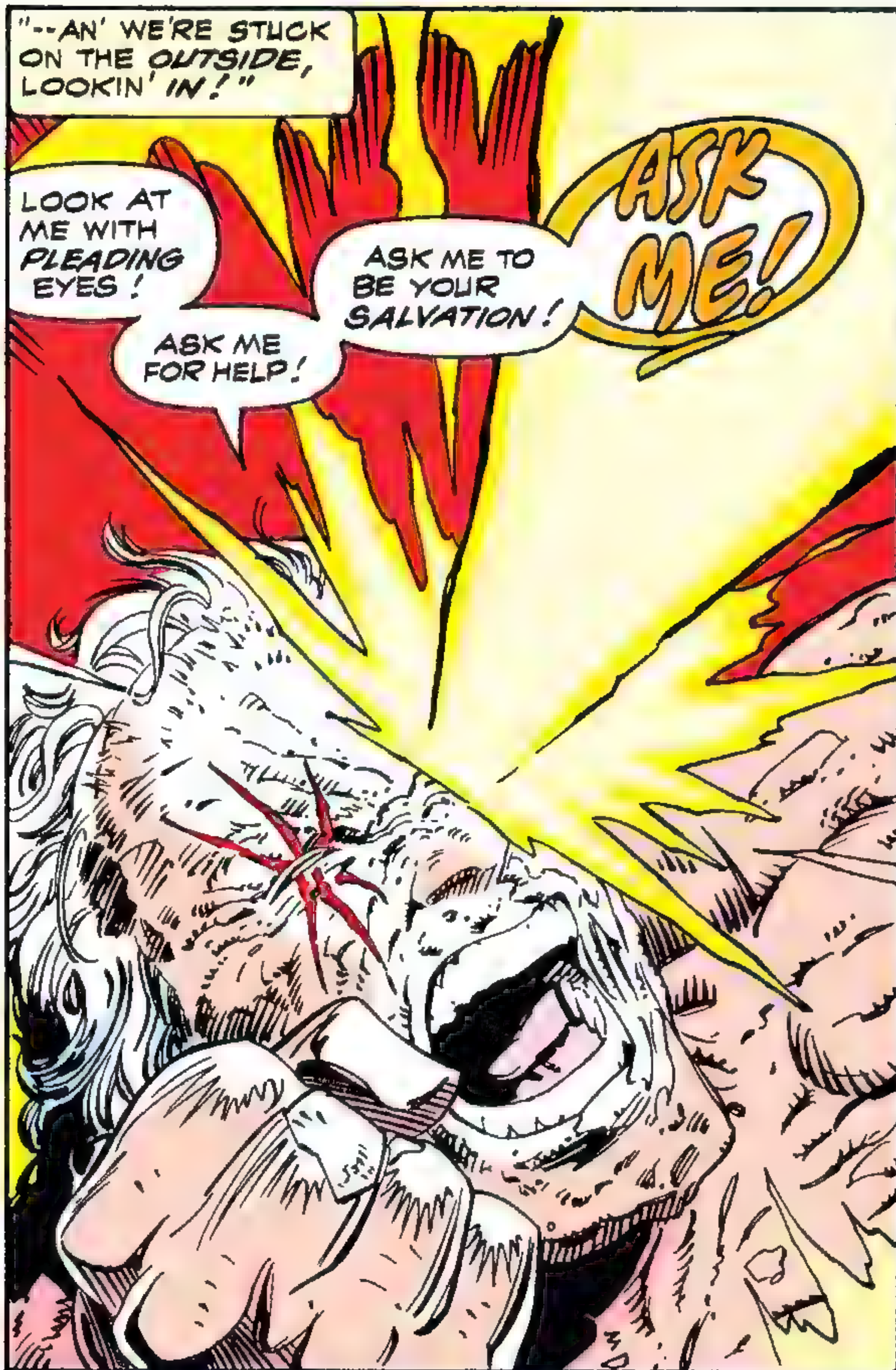


WE CAN WORK
TO **HEAL**
YOUR WOUNDS,
WHATEVER THEY
ARE--LET'S WORK
THEM OUT
TOGETHER!



NO
YOU'RE
LYING.

IF I TRUST
YOU--YOU'LL
JUST
BETRAY ME
AGAIN!



"--AN' WE'RE STUCK ON THE OUTSIDE, LOOKIN' IN!"

LOOK AT ME WITH PLEADING EYES!

ASK ME FOR HELP!

ASK ME TO BE YOUR SALVATION!

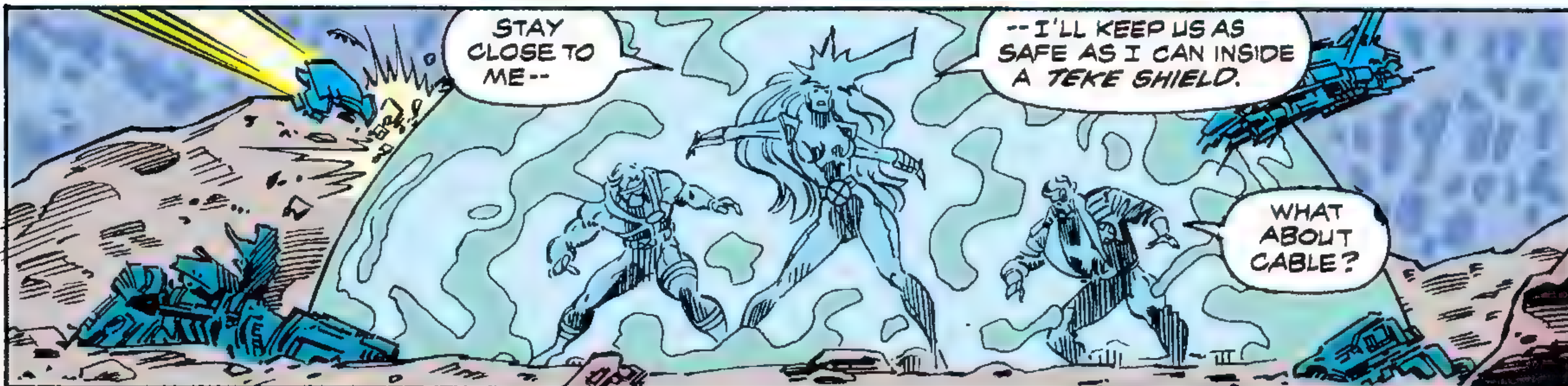
ASK ME!



HE'S DISMANTLED THE ENTIRE TOWER!

BUT HE NEVER BOTHERED TO TURN OFF THE MACHINERY!

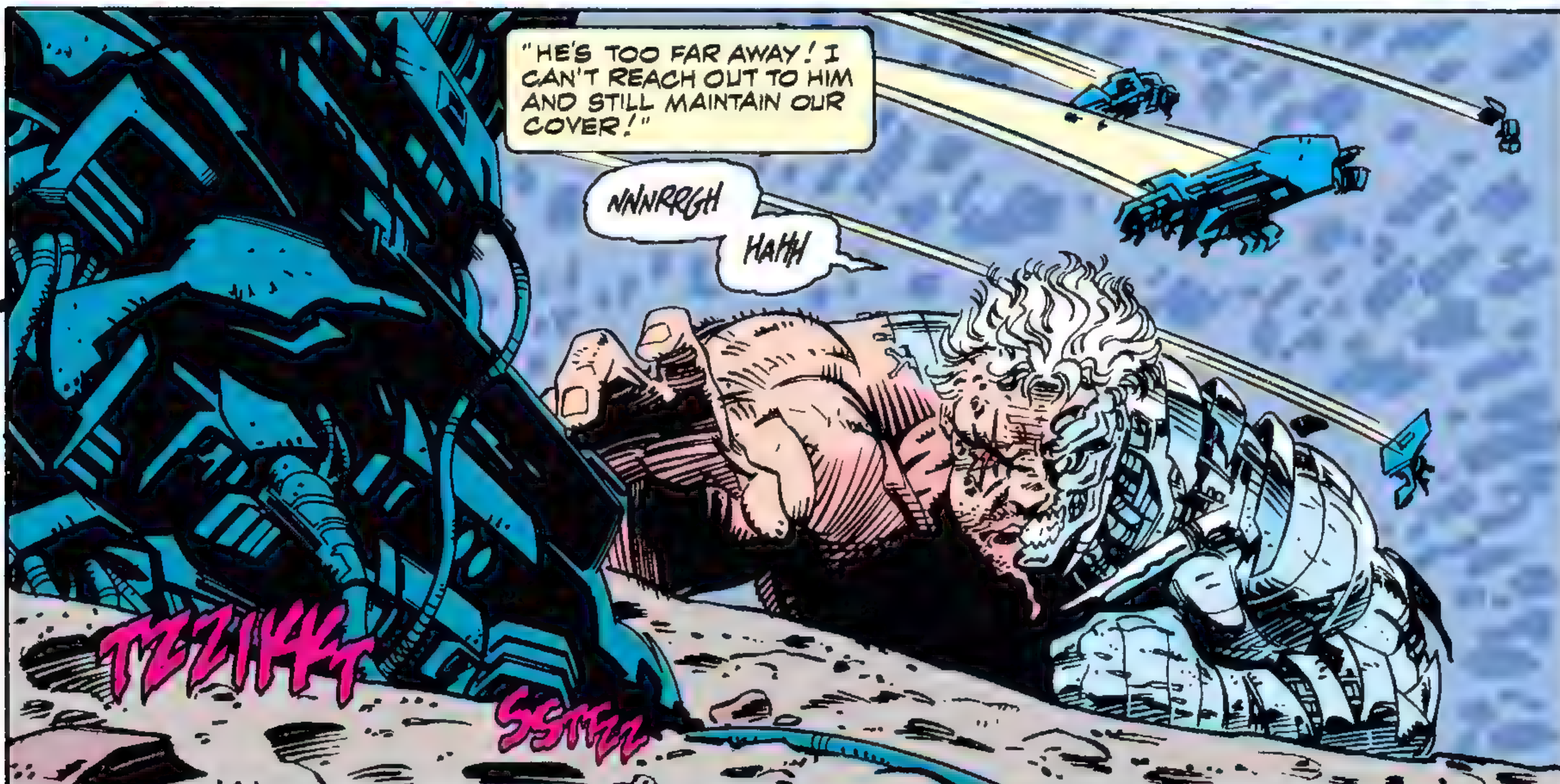
THE AMOUNT OF ELECTROMAGNETIC ENERGY SPINNING AROUND IN HERE IS PHENOMENAL!



STAY CLOSE TO ME--

-- I'LL KEEP US AS SAFE AS I CAN INSIDE A TEKE SHIELD.

WHAT ABOUT CABLE?



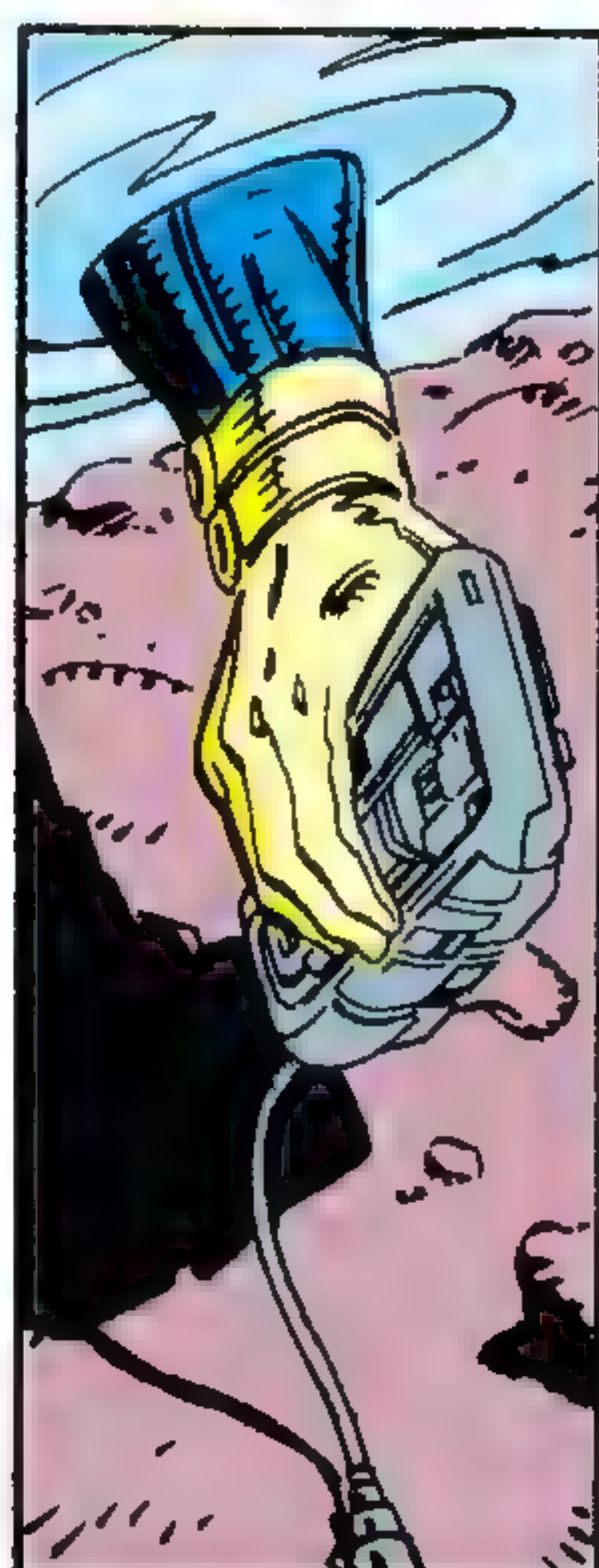
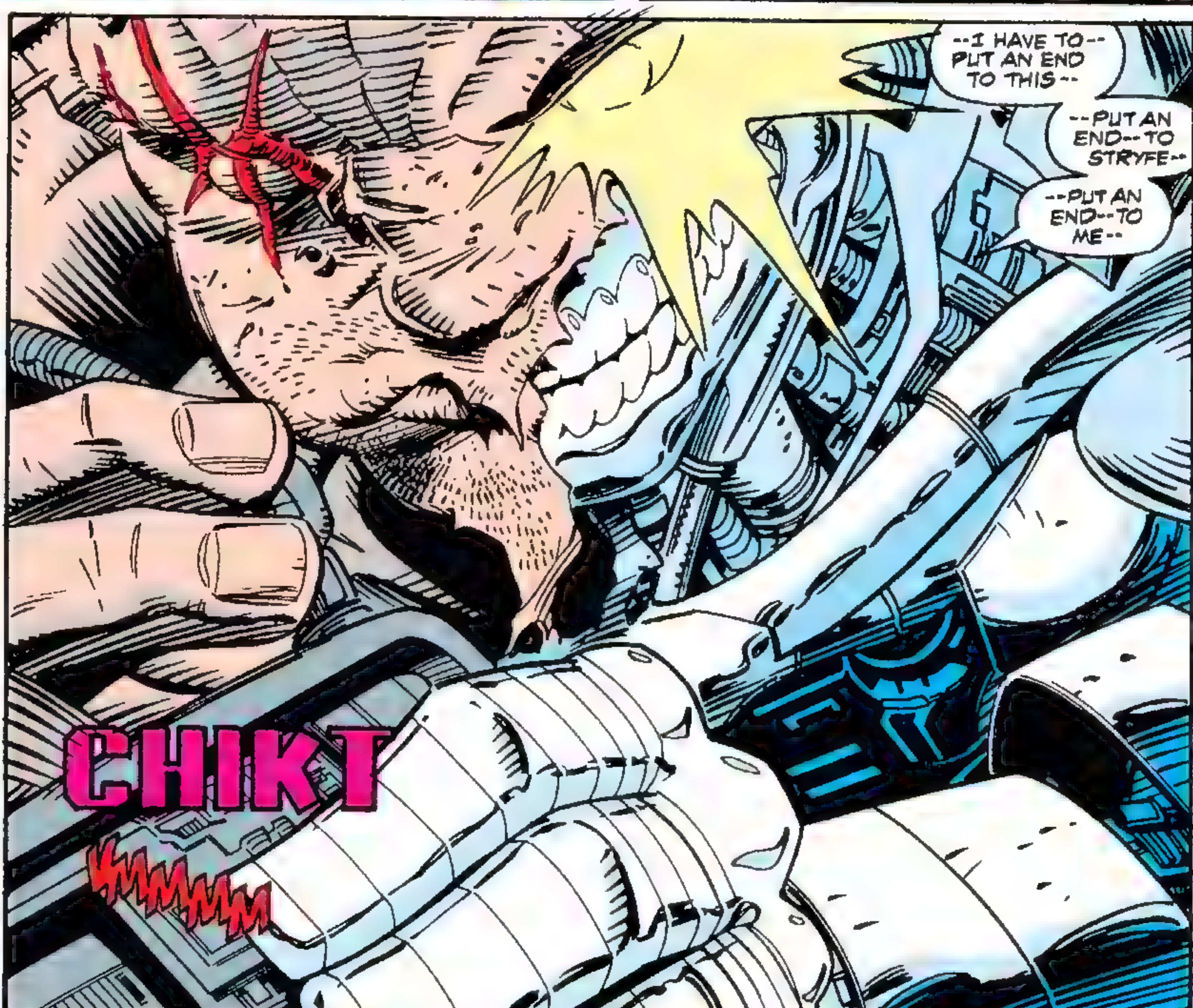
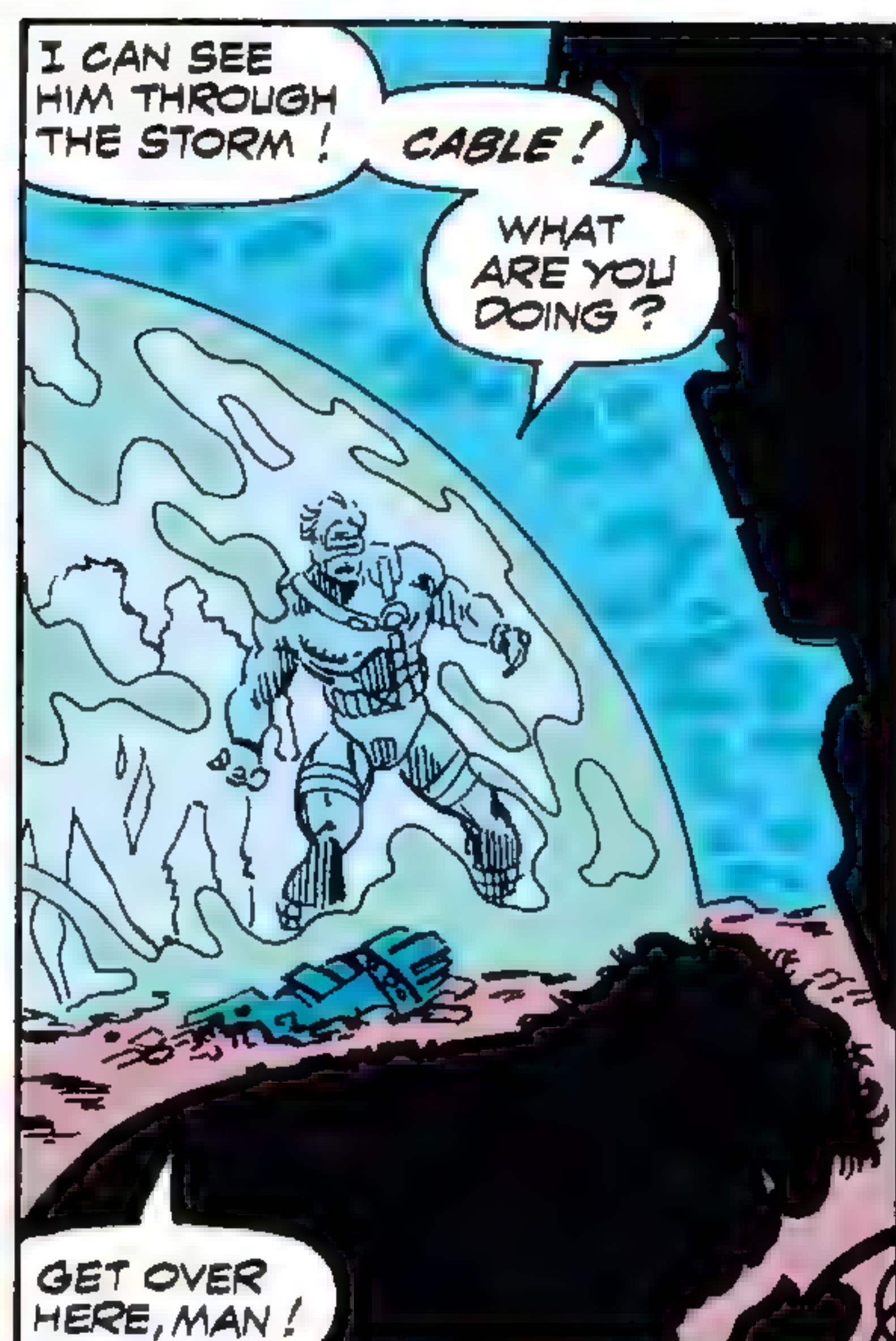
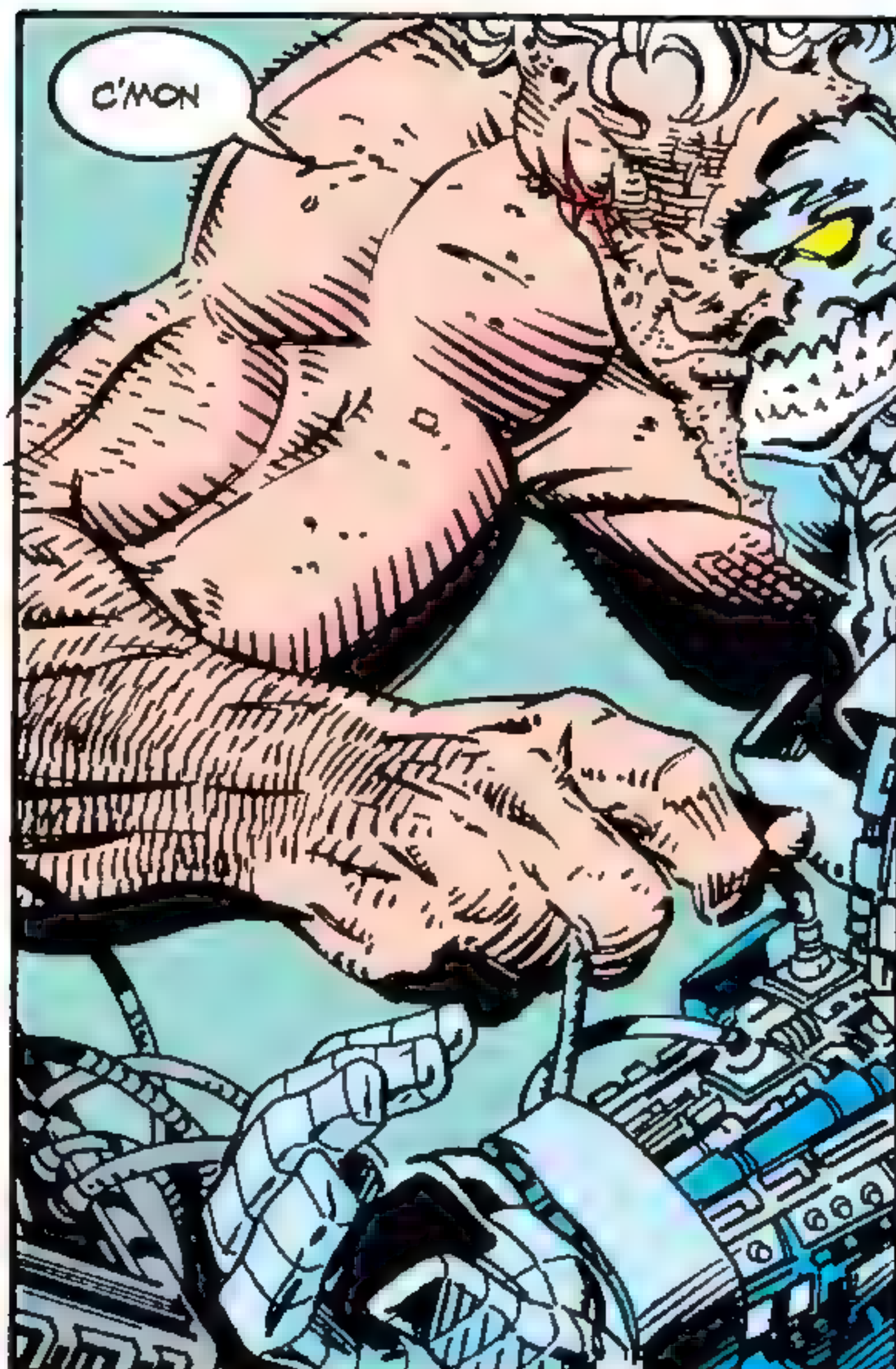
"HE'S TOO FAR AWAY! I CAN'T REACH OUT TO HIM AND STILL MAINTAIN OUR COVER!"

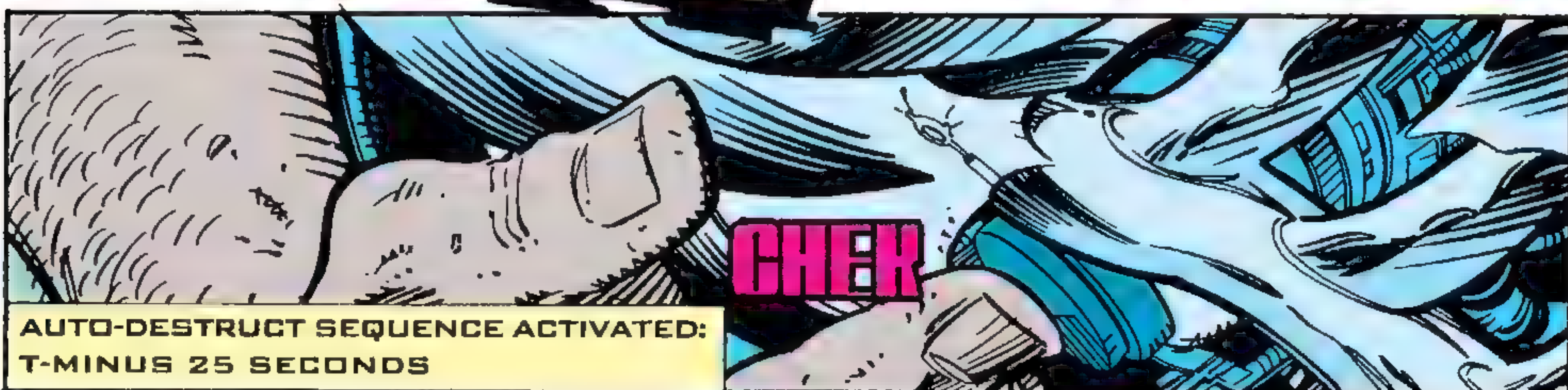
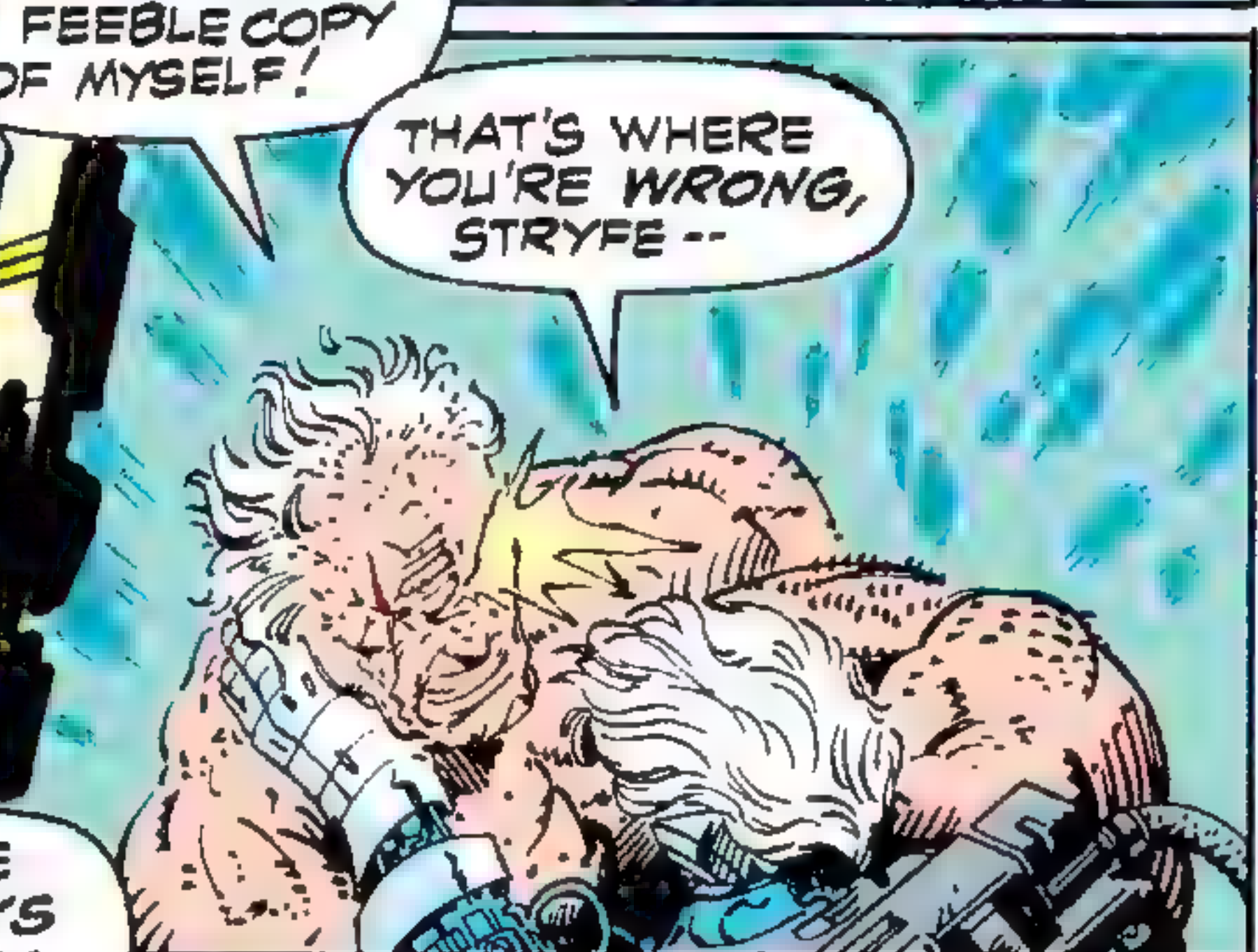
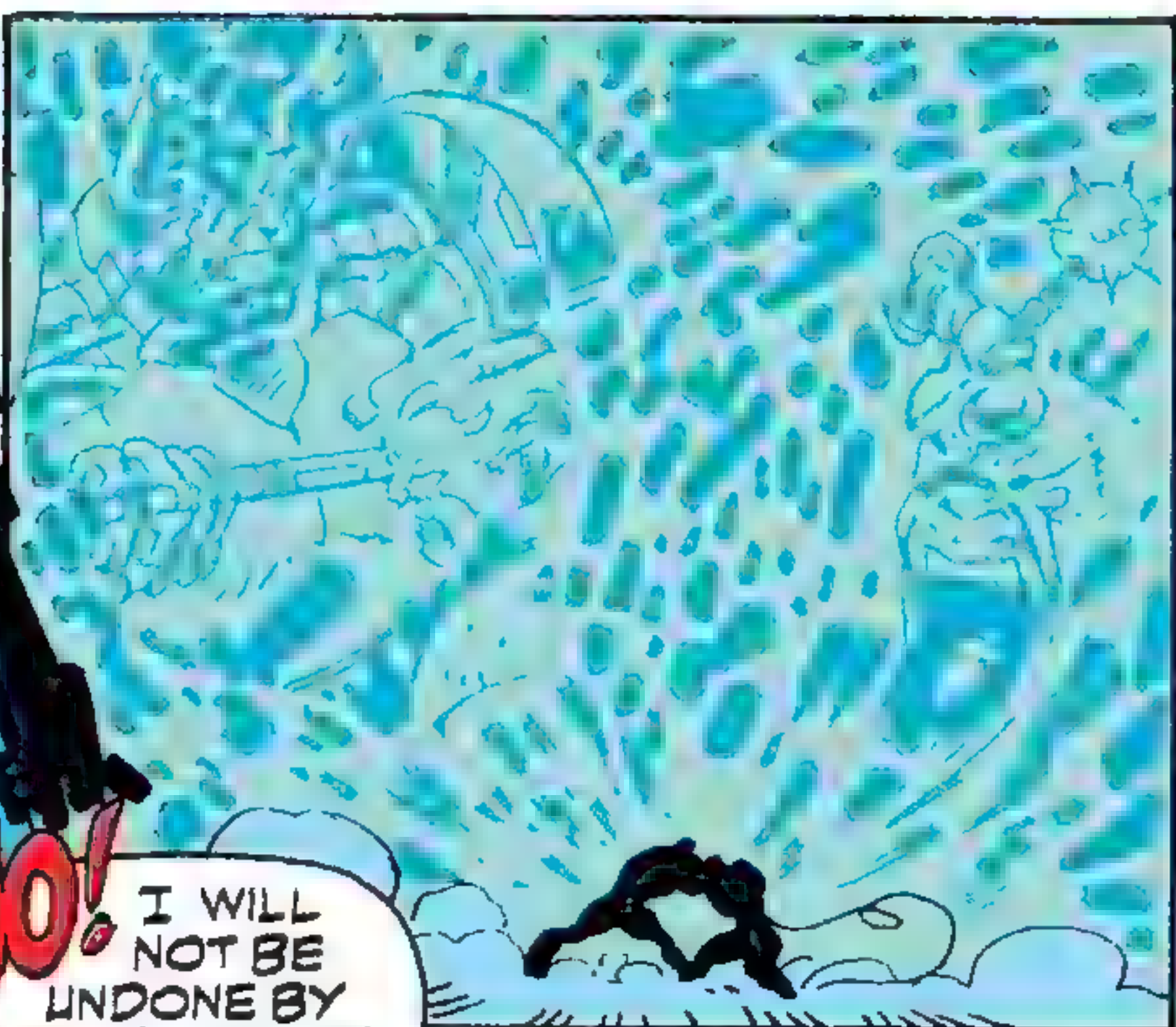
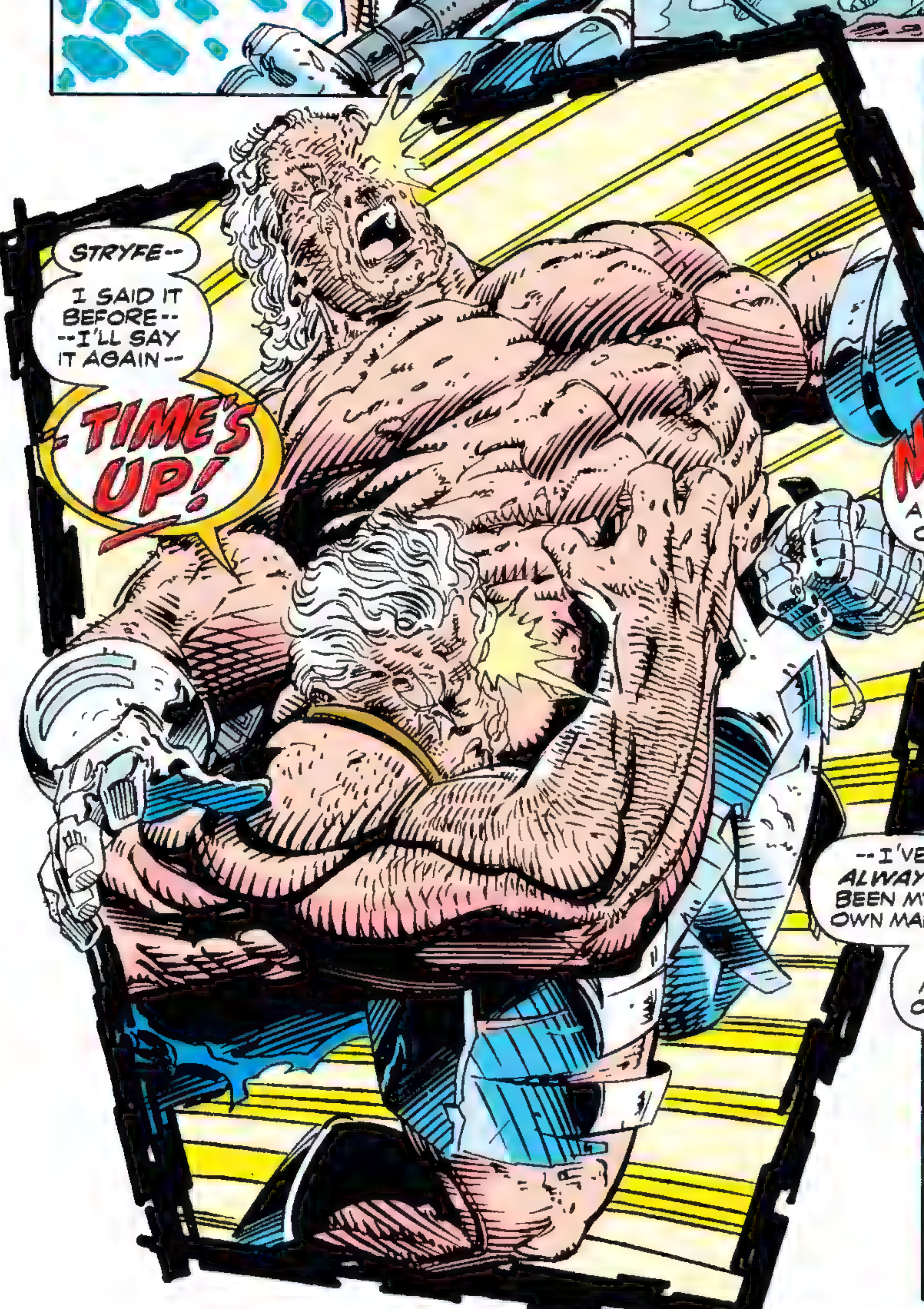
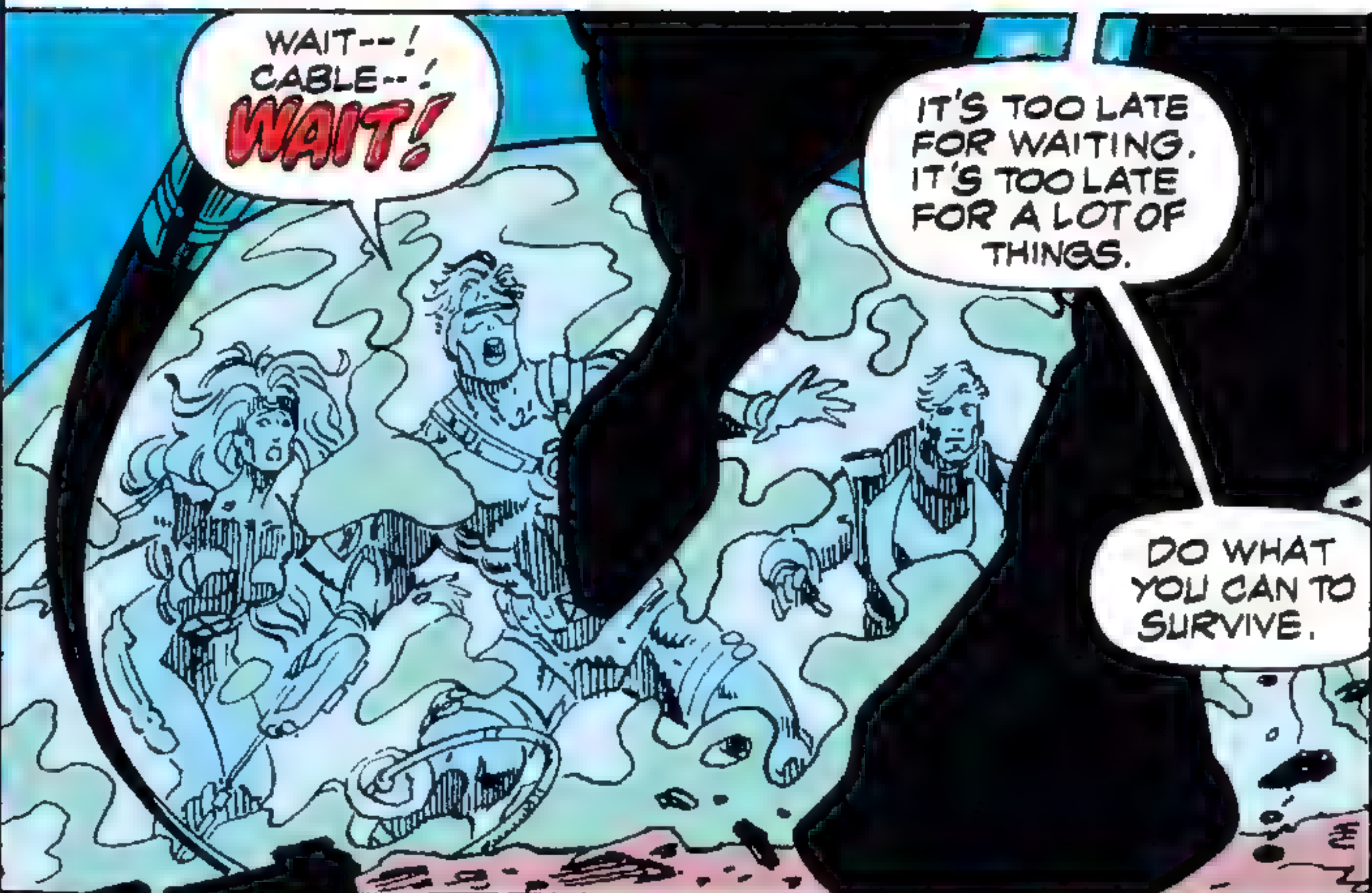
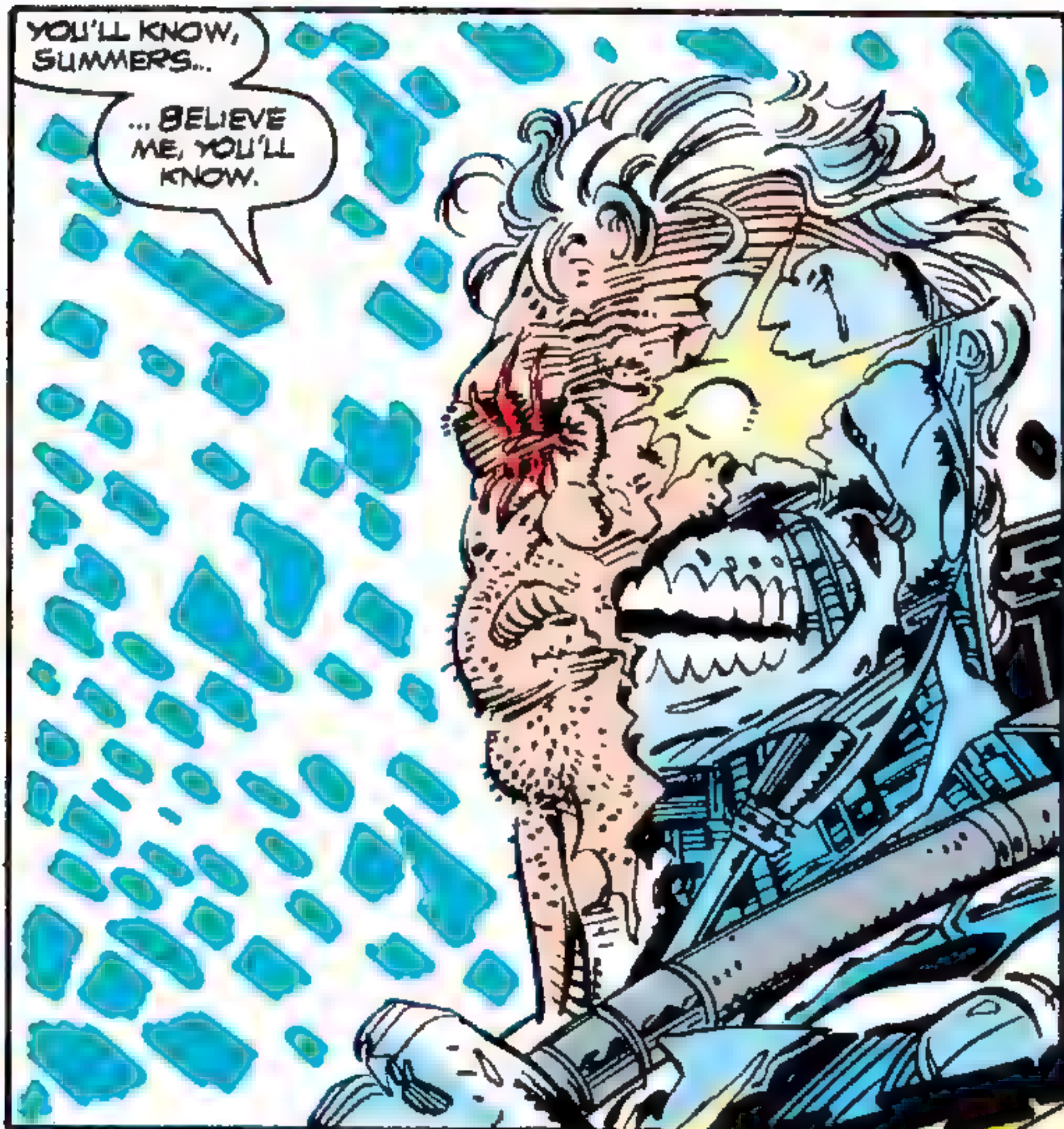
NNRRGH

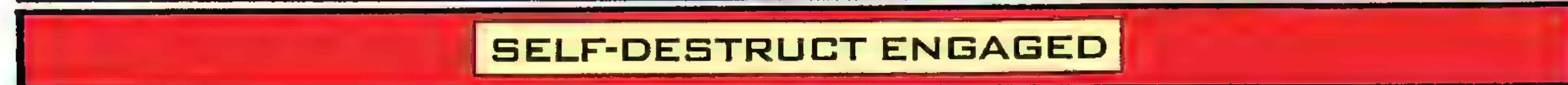
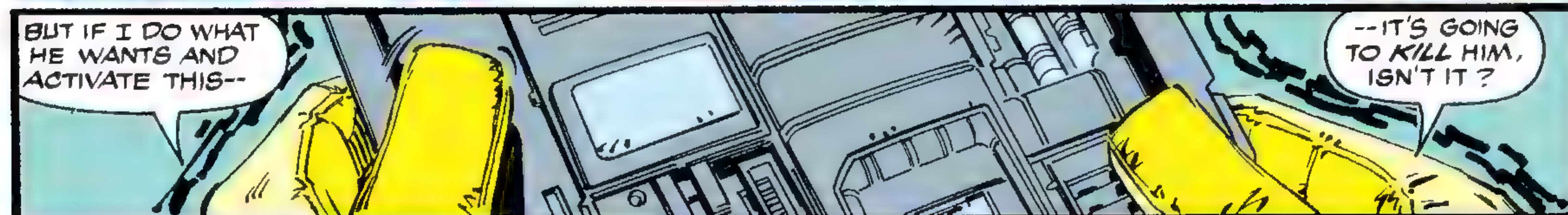
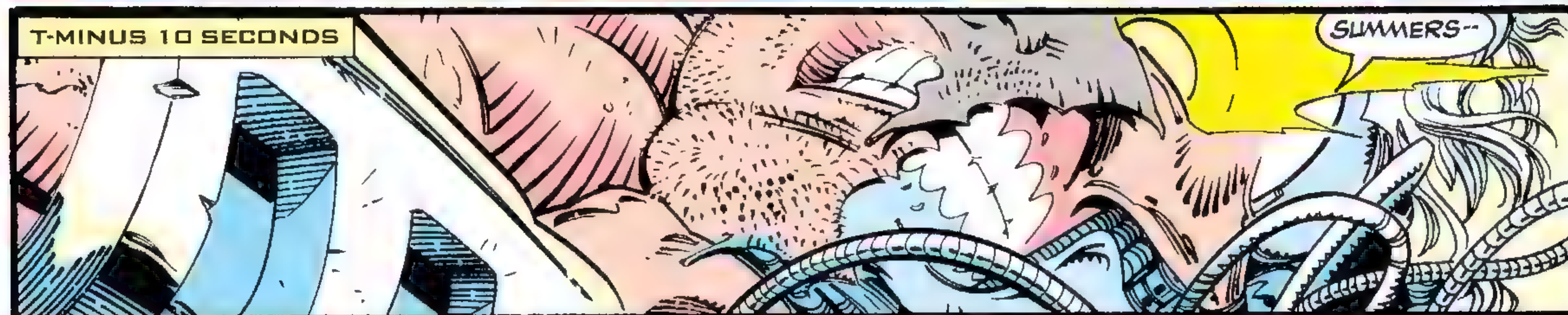
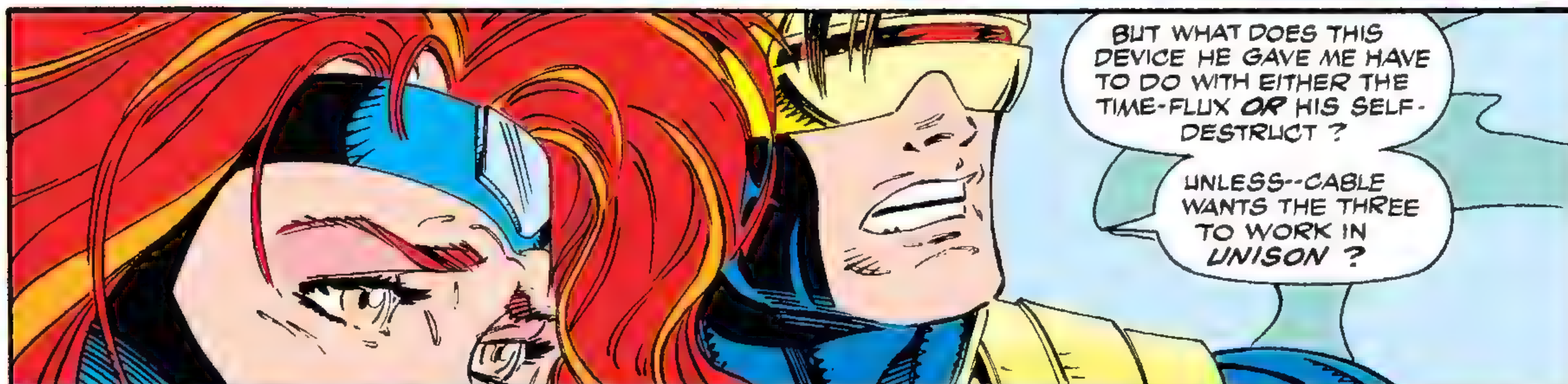
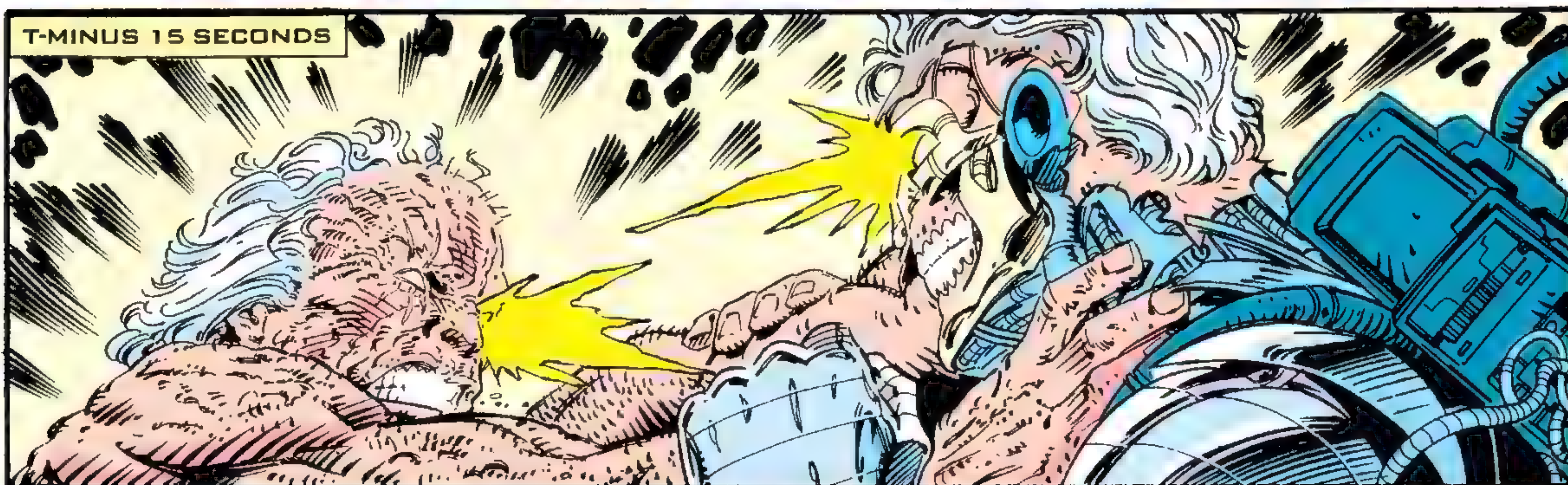
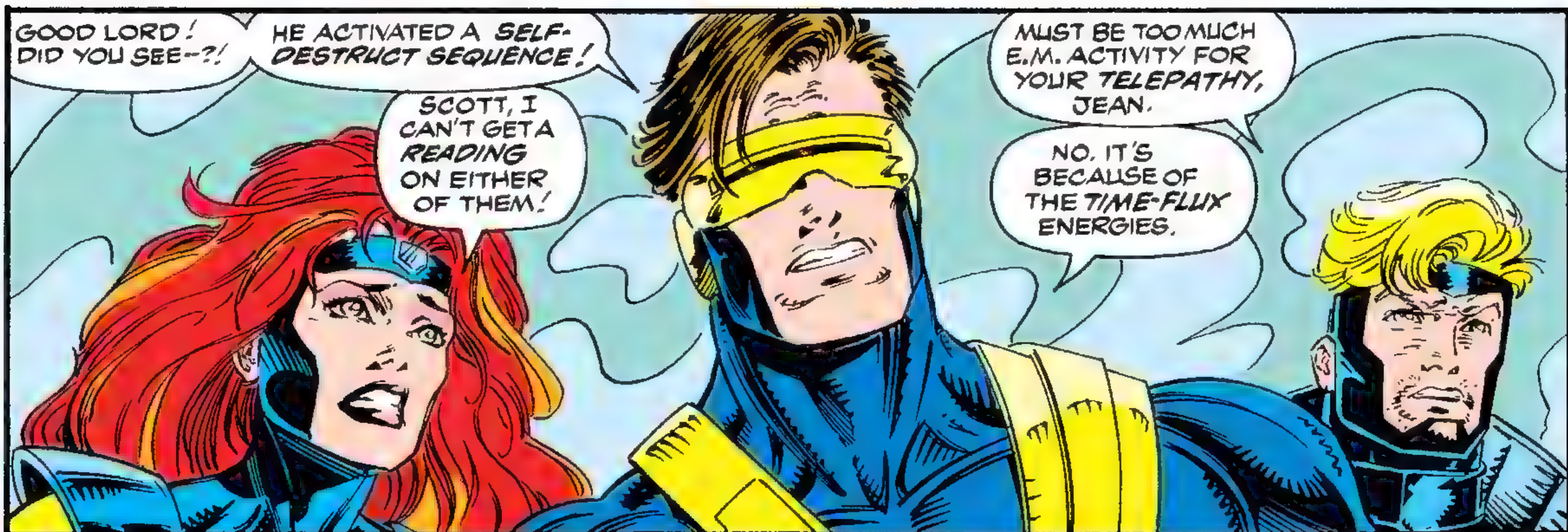
HAAH

ZZZZZZ

SSZZ







SUMMERS!

**TOOM
TOOM**

BWOMPH!

ACTIVATE
THE
VORTEX!!

SCOTT--?

I--I CAN'T
DO THIS TO
HIM--

--TO
THEM--

FWA THW OUMM

SCOTTIE--

--IF YOU
DON'T--

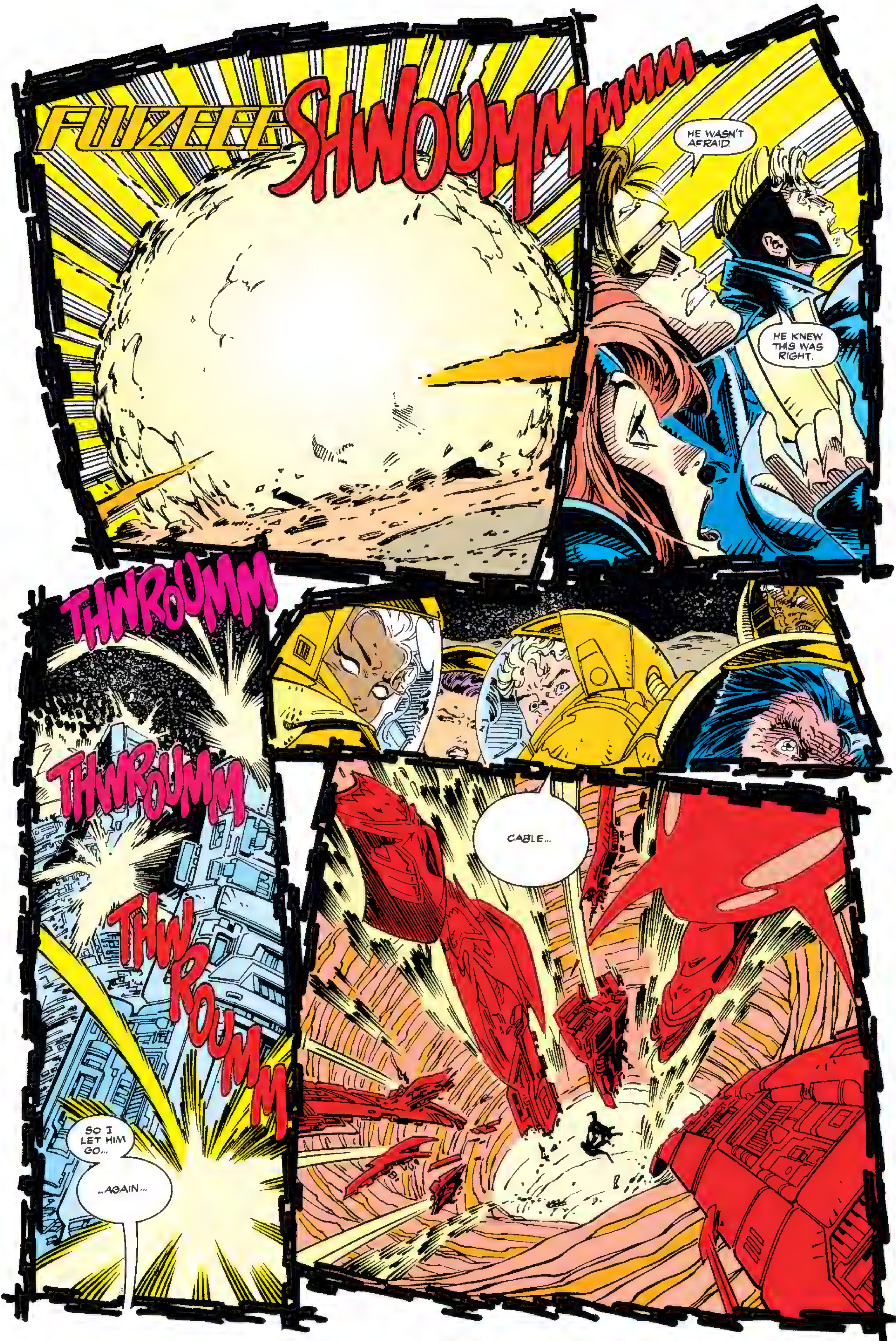
--WE MAY
JUST **ALL**
END UP
DYING!

SUMMERS,
FOR ALL OUR
SAKES--
DO IT!!

PLEASE.

GOD
FORGIVE
ME.

CLIK



THE TREMENDOUS ENERGIES RIPPED INTO THE TIME VORTEX ARE, PERHAPS, ALL THE MORE IMPRESSIVE BY THE OVERWHELMING SILENCE.

IN THE VACUUM OF SPACE, LOCKED IN A DEATH-GRIP WHOSE BONDS GO FAR BEYOND THE PHYSICAL--

--CABLE AND STRYFE--

--DISAPPEAR WITHOUT A SOUND.

BUT SCOTT SUMMERS AND JEAN GREY CAN HEAR THEIR DYING SCREAMS.

THEY HEAR THE HAUNTED DEATH-KNELL AS IT RIPS THROUGH THEIR VERY SOULS.

AND WHEN THE SINGING OF THE ELECTROMAGNETIC STORM IS DONE--

--NOTHING IS LEFT BUT DEAFENING SILENCE--

--AND THE DESOLATE BEATING OF TWO YOUNG PEOPLE'S HEARTS.

DRUMBEATS OF DESPAIR, WHICH SLOWLY BRING TO A CLOSE-- THE EXECUTIONER'S SONG...

CABLE KNEW
WHAT HE WAS
DOING--

-- THE EQUIPMENT
HE WAS CARRYING
FOCUSED THE
ENERGIES OF THE
TIME-VORTEX
THROUGH IT--

-- AND HIS SELF-DESTRUCTION
OPENED THE RIFT NEEDED TO
BRING STRYFE DOWN.

FUNNY, THE WHOLE THING
STARTED WITH US THINK-
ING CABLE WAS A
MURDERER... BUT IN THE
END, HE TURNED OUT TO
BE OUR ONLY HOPE.

HE WAS THAT.
IN ORDER TO SAVE
US ALL--

-- WE HAD
TO SACRIFICE
HIM...

... A
SECOND
TIME.

SCOTT--
NO-- YOU
DON'T
THINK...

I DON'T
KNOW, JEAN.

I DON'T
KNOW IF WE'LL
EVER
BE SURE.

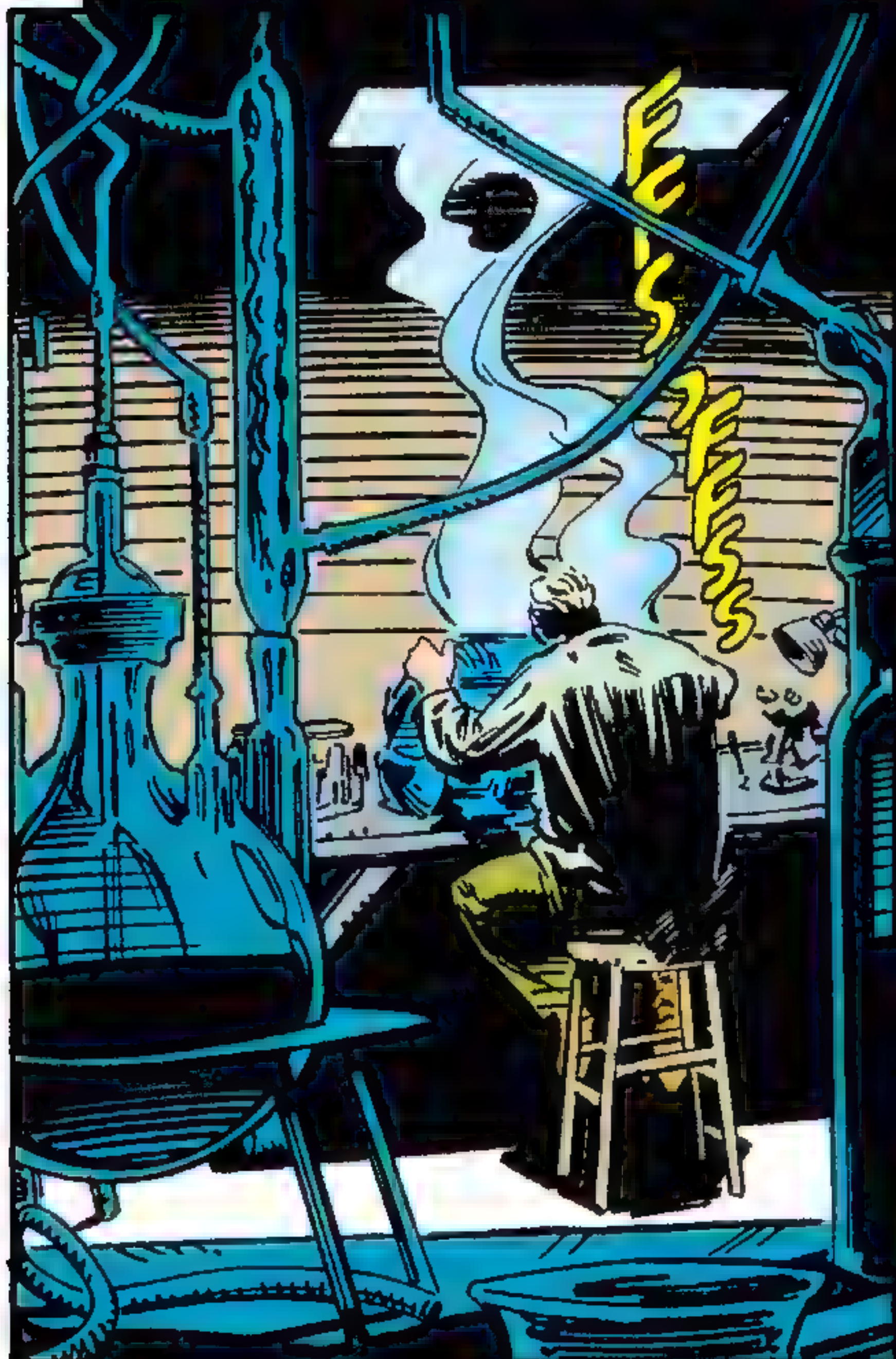
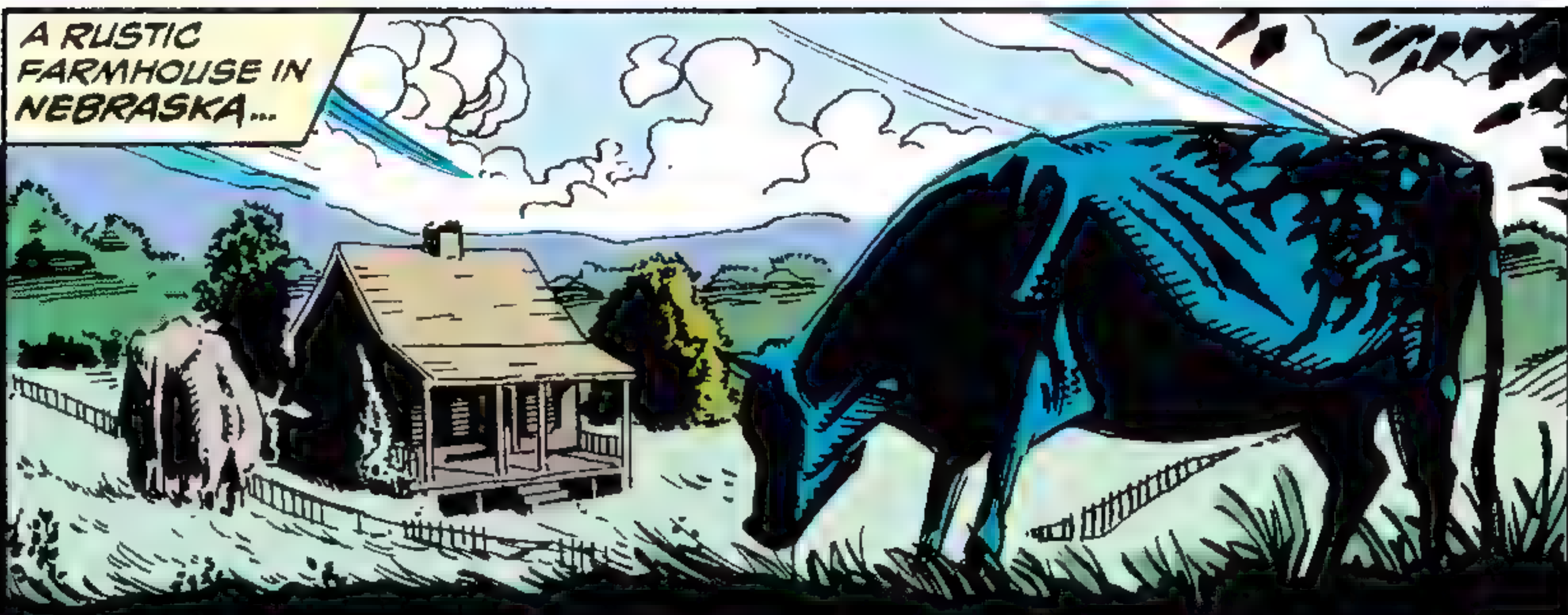
"BUT I DO
KNOW THIS..."

"... I'M GOING TO
SPEND THE **REST** OF MY
LIFE THINKING ABOUT TODAY...
THINKING ABOUT **HIM** AND
WONDERING..."

"... GOD HELP ME,
I'LL NEVER STOP
WONDERING."

**AS THE
OLD SONG
DIES...**

A RUSTIC
FARMHOUSE IN
NEBRASKA...



I'VE
PSIONICALLY
OPENED THE
CANNISTER!



SIR -- IT IS
EMPTY!

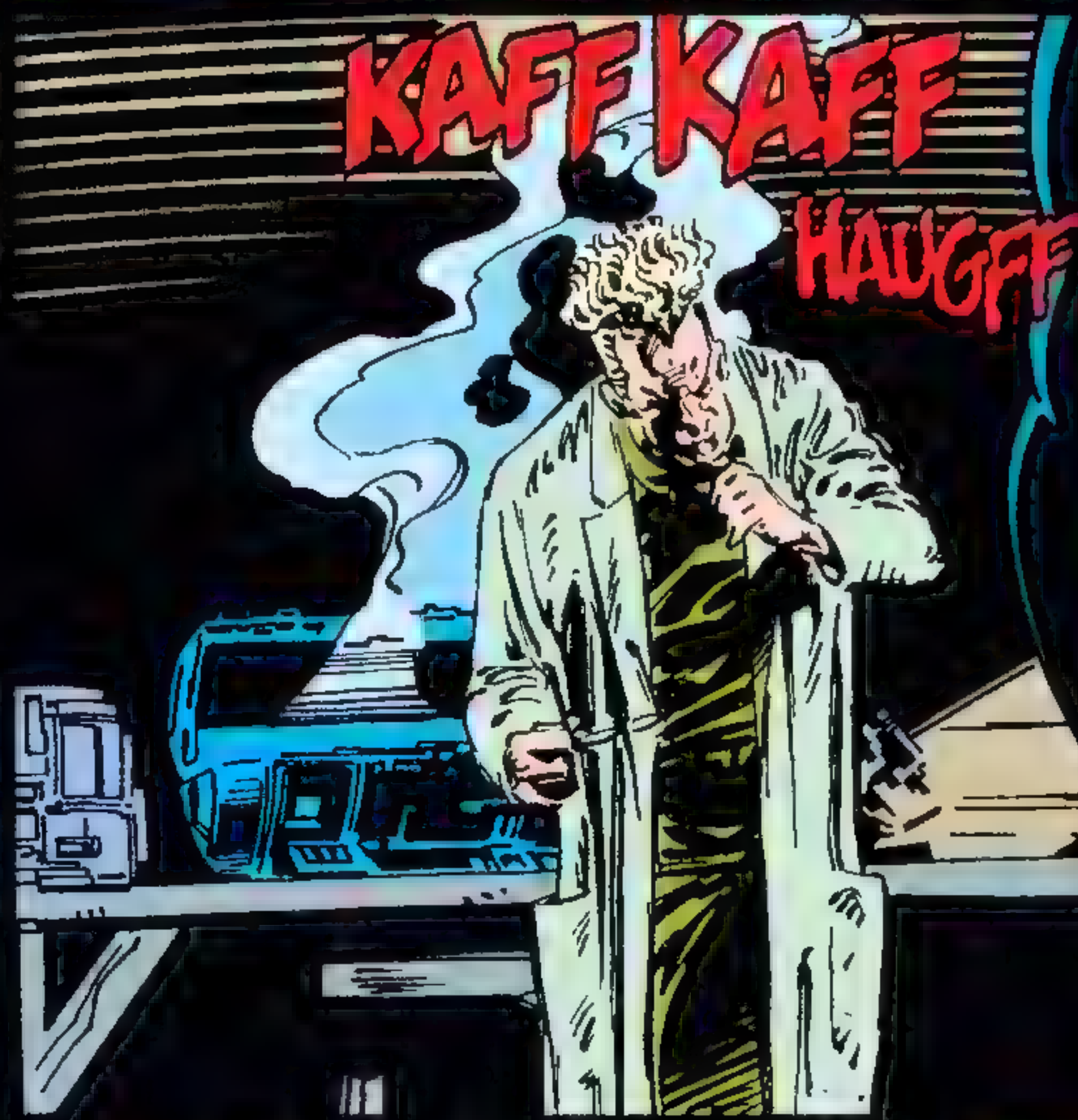
**CURSE STRYFE'S
BLOOD!**

I WAS PROMISED
THE SUMMERS'
FAMILY GENETIC
MATERIAL!



HMMPH.
SHOULD I BE
SURPRISED?

**KAFF KAFF
HAUGFF**



IT WAS TO BE
EXPECTED.

WE PROCEED, AS
EVER, ONWARDS,
TOWARD TOMOR-
ROW.

OH, AND
GORDON--

--PLEASE DO
LOOK AFTER
THAT COUGH...



**... A
NEW
CHORUS
BEGINS...**



MARVEL[®]
COMICS



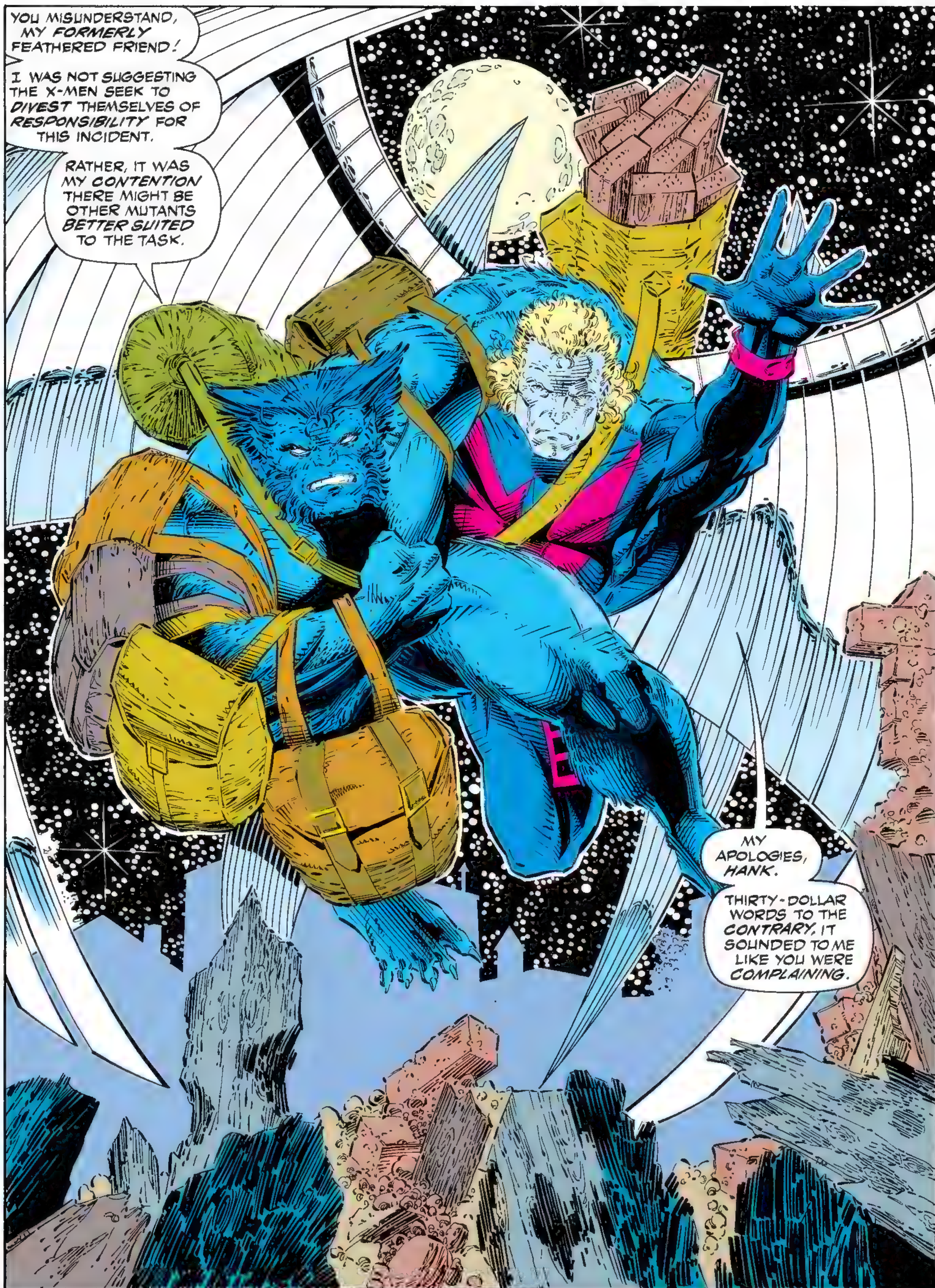
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APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
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AUTHORITY

THE UNCANNY

X-MEN[®]

**SONG'S
END**



YOU MISUNDERSTAND,
MY FORMERLY
FEATHERED FRIEND!

I WAS NOT SUGGESTING
THE X-MEN SEEK TO
DIVEST THEMSELVES OF
RESPONSIBILITY FOR
THIS INCIDENT.

RATHER, IT WAS
MY CONTENTION
THERE MIGHT BE
OTHER MUTANTS
BETTER SUITED
TO THE TASK.

MY
APOLOGIES,
HANK.

THIRTY-DOLLAR
WORDS TO THE
CONTRARY, IT
SOUNDED TO ME
LIKE YOU WERE
COMPLAINING.

THE EPILOGUE TO THE **X-CUTIONER'S SONG**

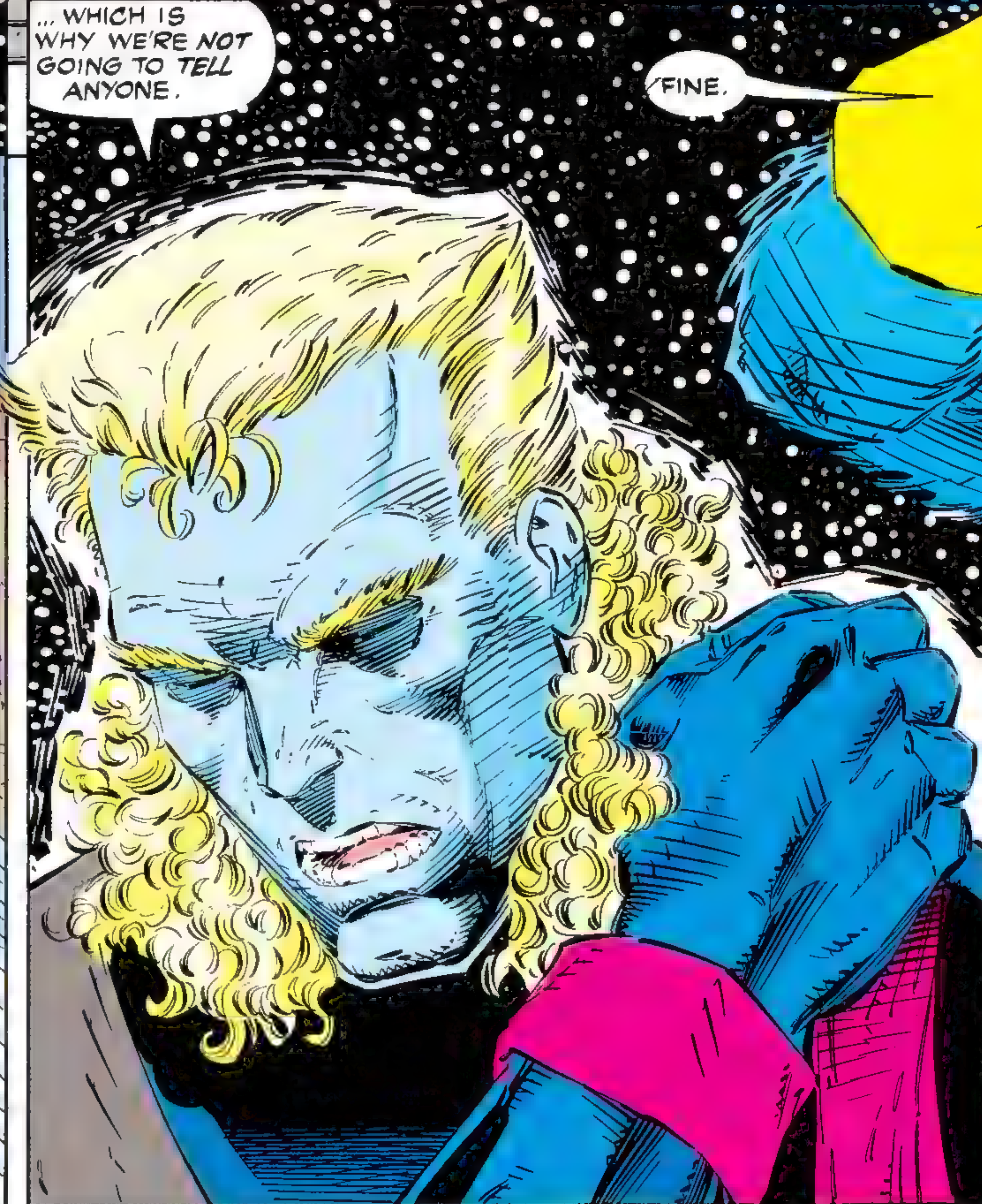
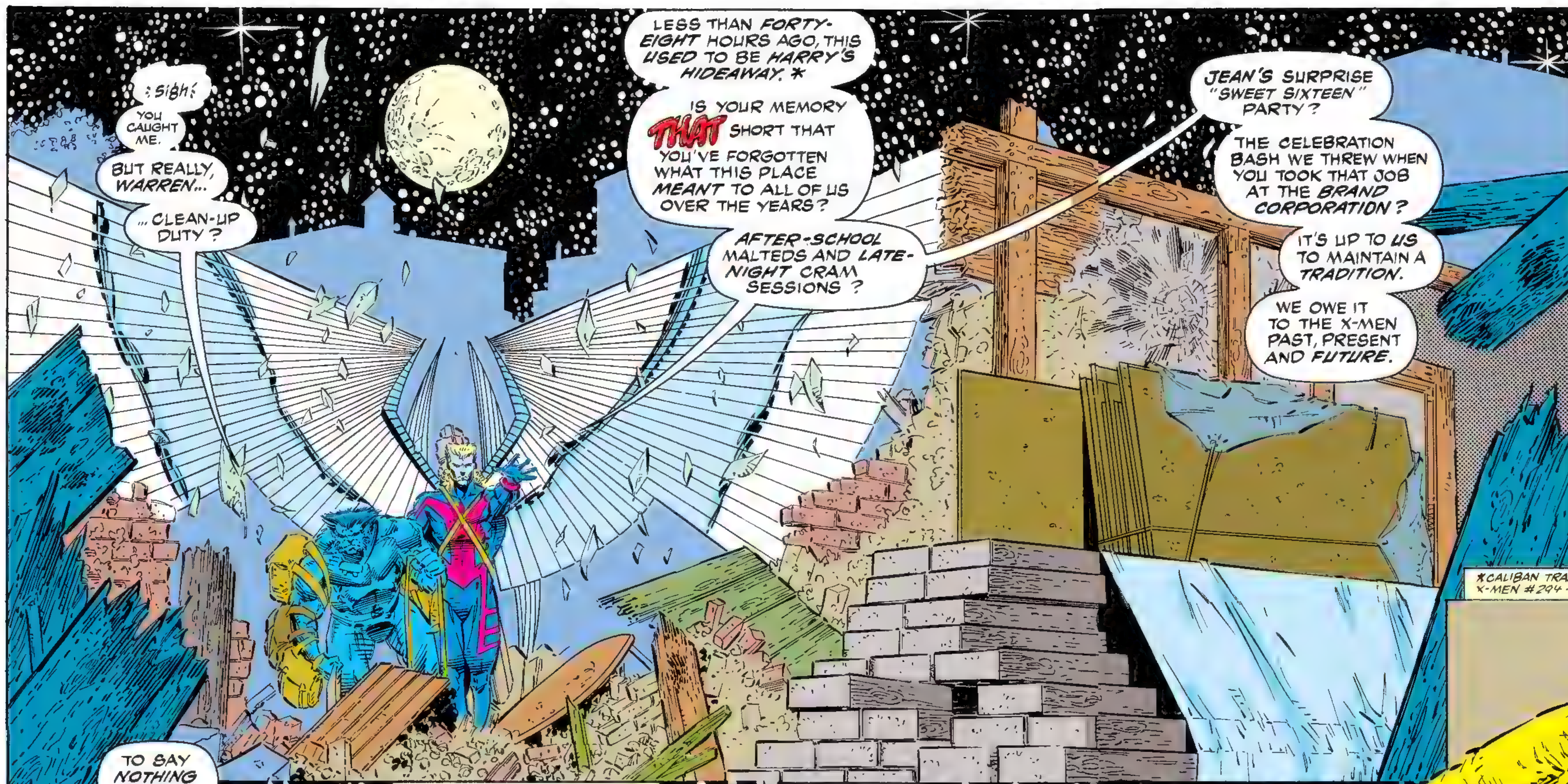
STAN LEE PRESENTS THE UNCANNY

X-MEN IN

"UP AND AROUND"

BY LOBDELL
PETERSON/PANOSIAN
ELIPOULLOS/JAVINS
HARRAS/DEFALCO

X-CALIBAN TRASHED IT IN UNCANNY
X-MEN #294 -- BAR-HOPPING B.U.H.



MEANWHILE...

... ON THE ROOFTOP
OF PROFESSOR
XAVIER'S SCHOOL
FOR GIFTED
YOUNGSTERS--

-- SITS THE YOUNG
WOMAN KNOWN
ONLY AS ROGUE.

LIKE SO MANY
NIGHTS BEFORE
THIS...

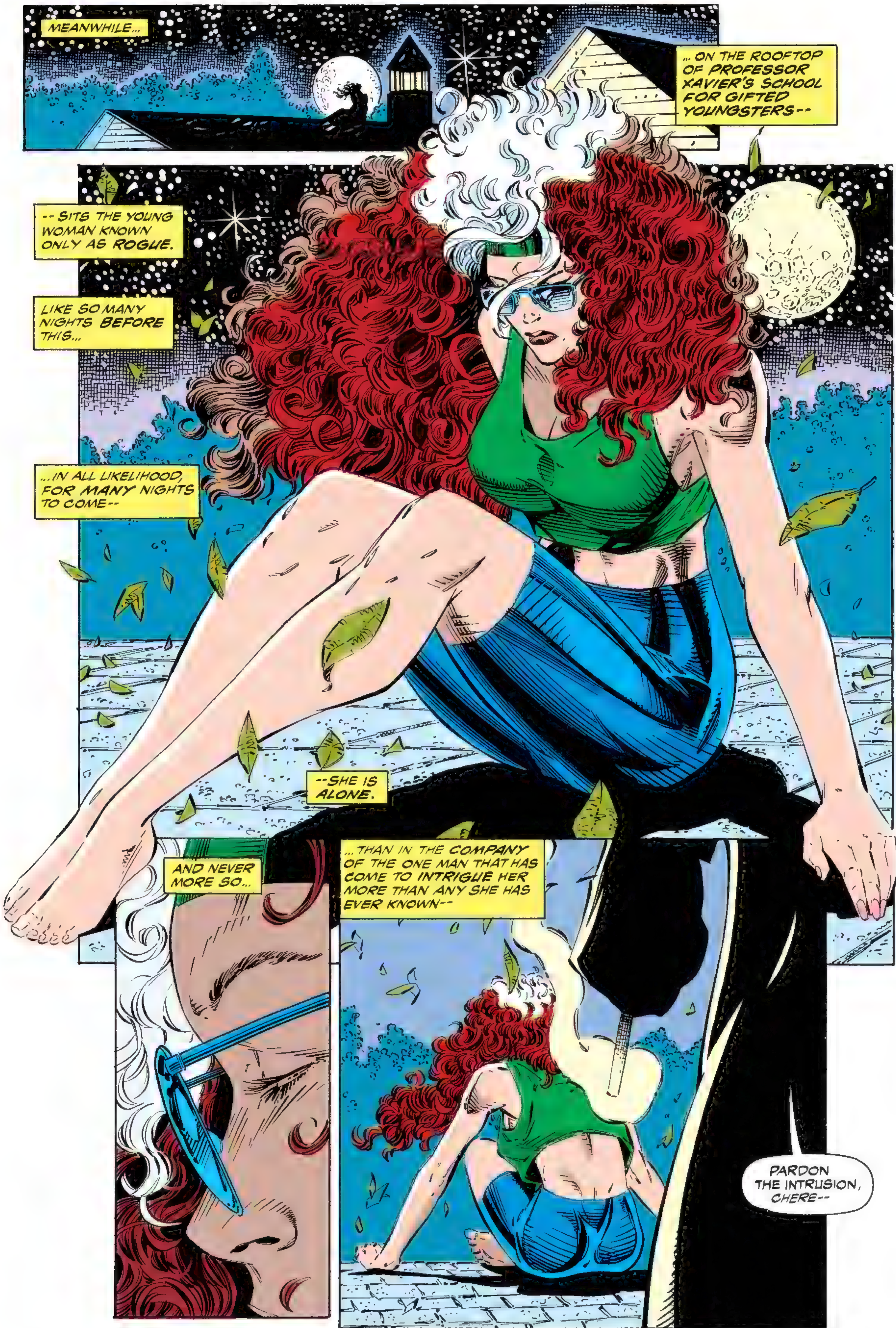
...IN ALL LIKELIHOOD,
FOR MANY NIGHTS
TO COME--

--SHE IS
ALONE.

AND NEVER
MORE SO...

... THAN IN THE COMPANY
OF THE ONE MAN THAT HAS
COME TO INTRIGUE HER
MORE THAN ANY SHE HAS
EVER KNOWN--

PARDON
THE INTRUSION,
CHERE--





--BUT ACCORDIN' TO DR. MACTAGGERT, YOU'RE STILL RECOVERIN' FROM THE OPTIC DAMAGE STROBE CAUSED.*

SHE'S RESTRICTED YOU TO COMPLETE BED REST.

DON'T TELL ME, GAMBIT--

--YOU'RE HERE TO FILL THE PRESCRIPTION.

* X-MEN #15. --DR. BOB



THAT WASN'T MY INTENTION, NO.

BUT SINCE YOU BROUGHT IT UP..



REMY, IF YA HAVE ANY FEELIN'S FOR ME--

-- ANY AT ALL...

... LEAVE ME ALONE.



S' FUNNY.



MY FEELINGS FOR YOU--

--ARE THE VERY SAME REASON I'M STAYIN'.

ELSEWHERE ON THE
SPRAWLING WEST-
CHESTER ESTATE...

TOO
COOL.

SCOTT AND
JEAN ARE
FREE--

--PROFESSOR
XAVIER IS CURED--

--AND OUR PROBLEMS
WITH CABLE AND STRYFE
ARE A THING OF THE
PAST.

OR
FUTURE.

OR
WHENEVER.

WONDER WHY
THE REST OF THE
X-DUDES SPEND
SO MUCH TIME
MOPING?

FROM HERE, IT'S
GOTTA BE THE
COOLEST GIG IN
THE WORLD.

PERHAPS YOU
NEED A BROADER
PERSPECTIVE?

I THOUGHT
I WAS ALONE
OUT--

AS DID
I, CHILD.

WHA--?!

WHO--?!

WUMPH

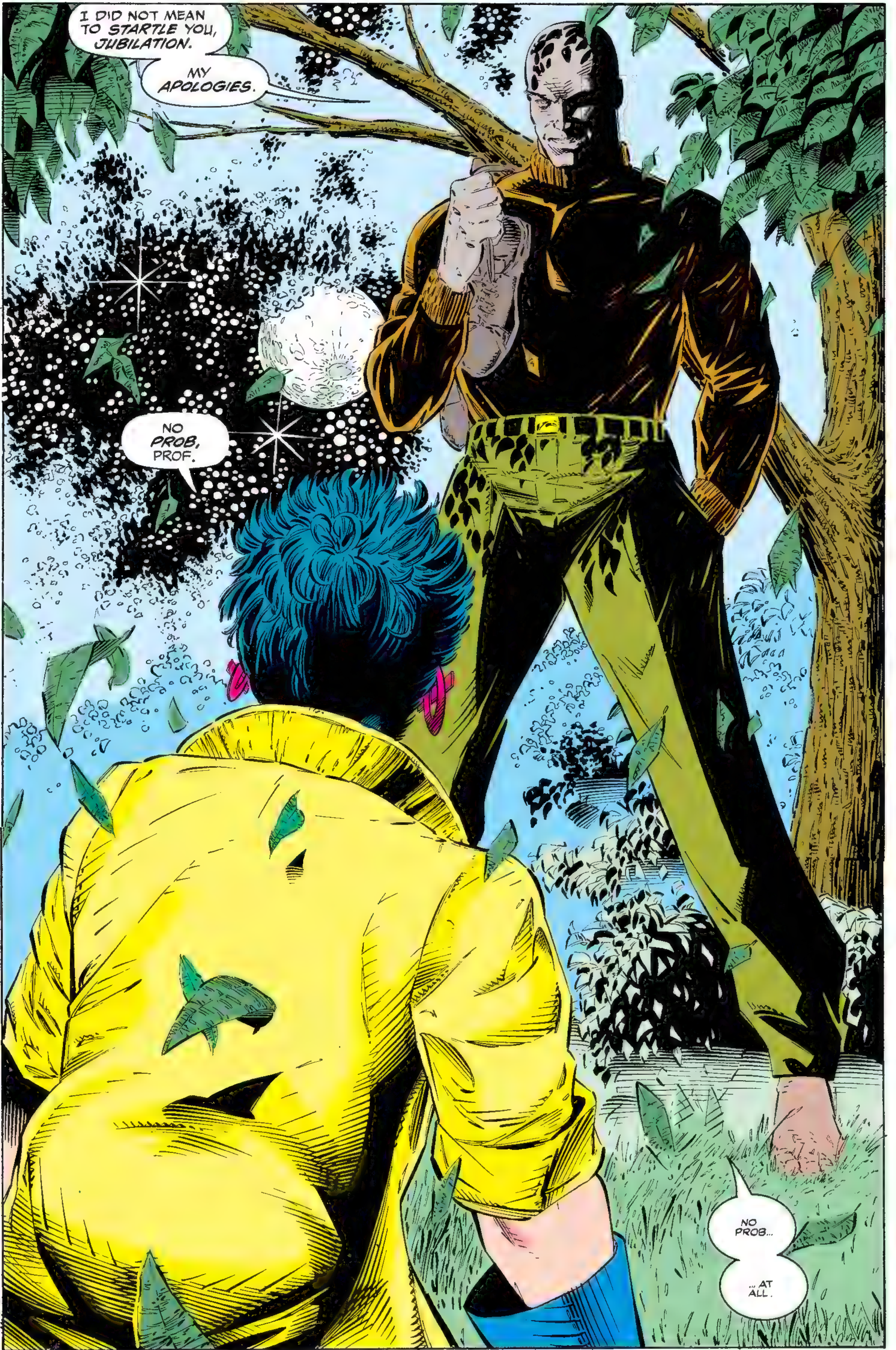
I DID NOT MEAN
TO STARTLE YOU,
JUBILATION.

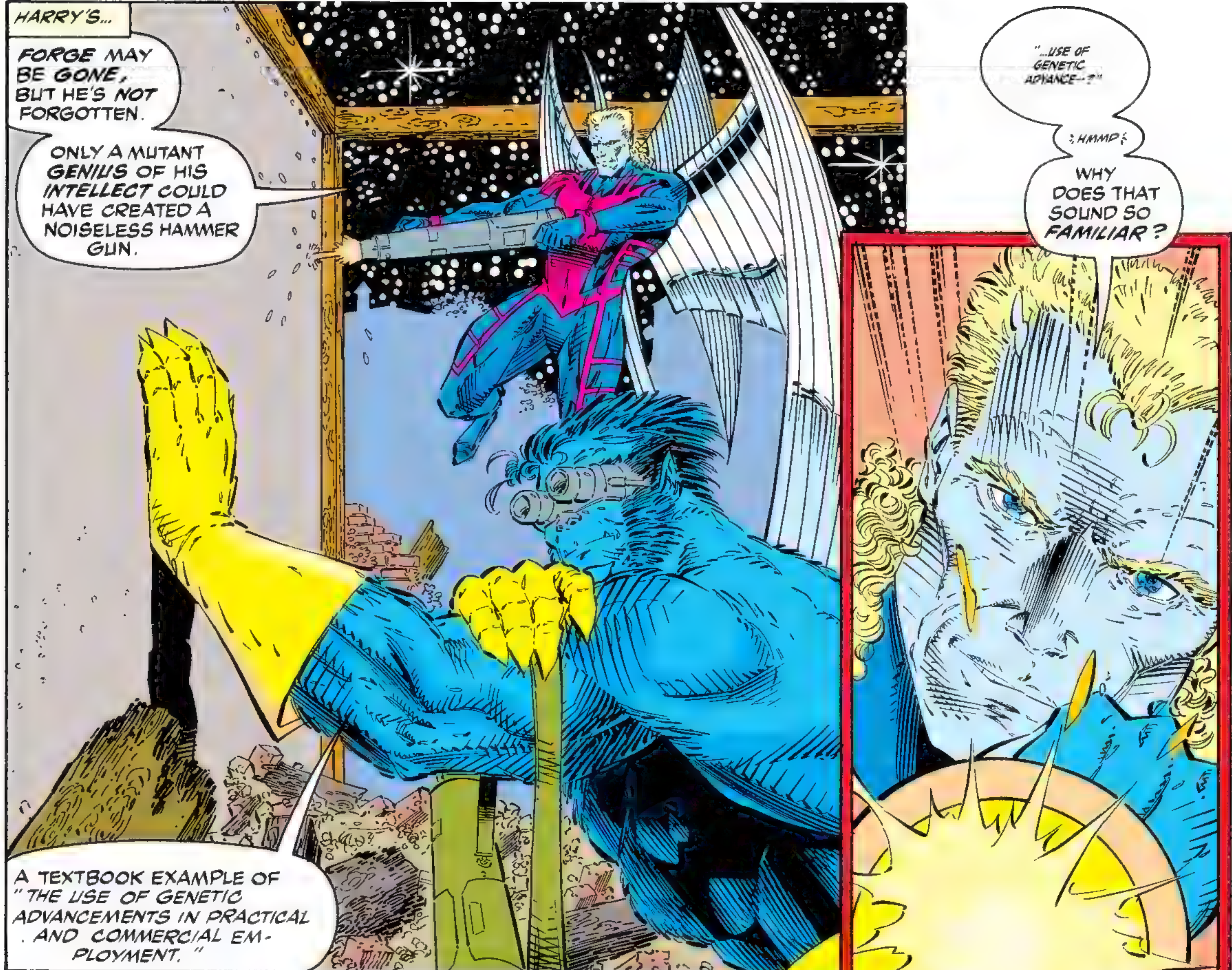
MY
APOLOGIES.

NO
PROB,
PROF.

NO
PROB...

...AT
ALL.





HARRY'S...

FORGE MAY BE GONE, BUT HE'S NOT FORGOTTEN.

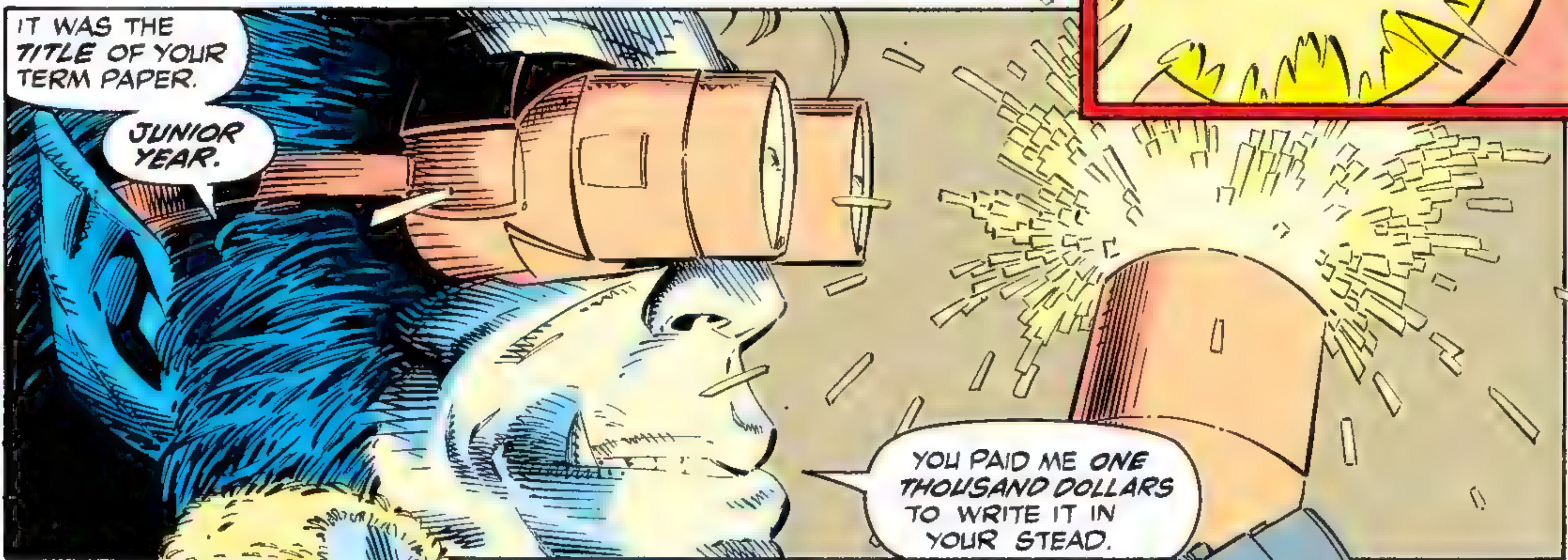
ONLY A MUTANT GENIUS OF HIS INTELLECT COULD HAVE CREATED A NOISELESS HAMMER GUN.

A TEXTBOOK EXAMPLE OF "THE USE OF GENETIC ADVANCEMENTS IN PRACTICAL AND COMMERCIAL EMPLOYMENT."

"...USE OF GENETIC ADVANCE--?"

HMMP?

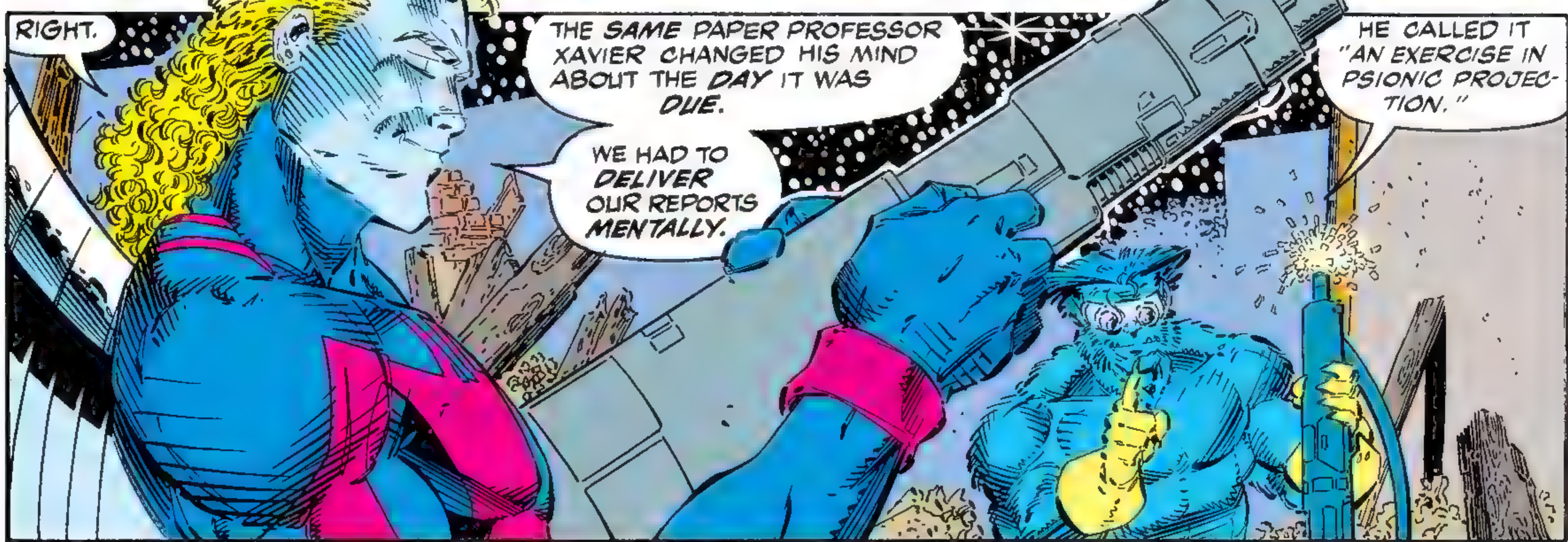
WHY DOES THAT SOUND SO FAMILIAR?



IT WAS THE TITLE OF YOUR TERM PAPER.

JUNIOR YEAR.

YOU PAID ME ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS TO WRITE IT IN YOUR STEAD.

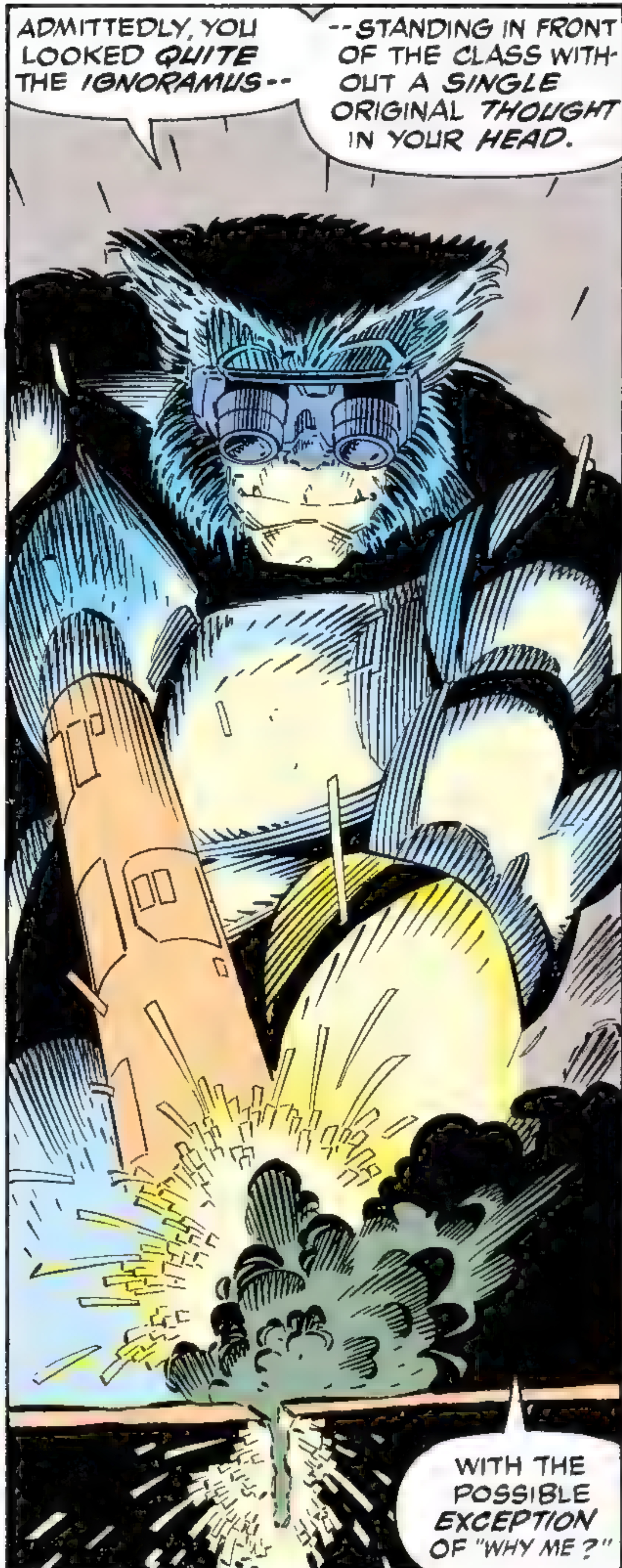


RIGHT.

THE SAME PAPER PROFESSOR XAVIER CHANGED HIS MIND ABOUT THE DAY IT WAS DUE.

WE HAD TO DELIVER OUR REPORTS MENTALLY.

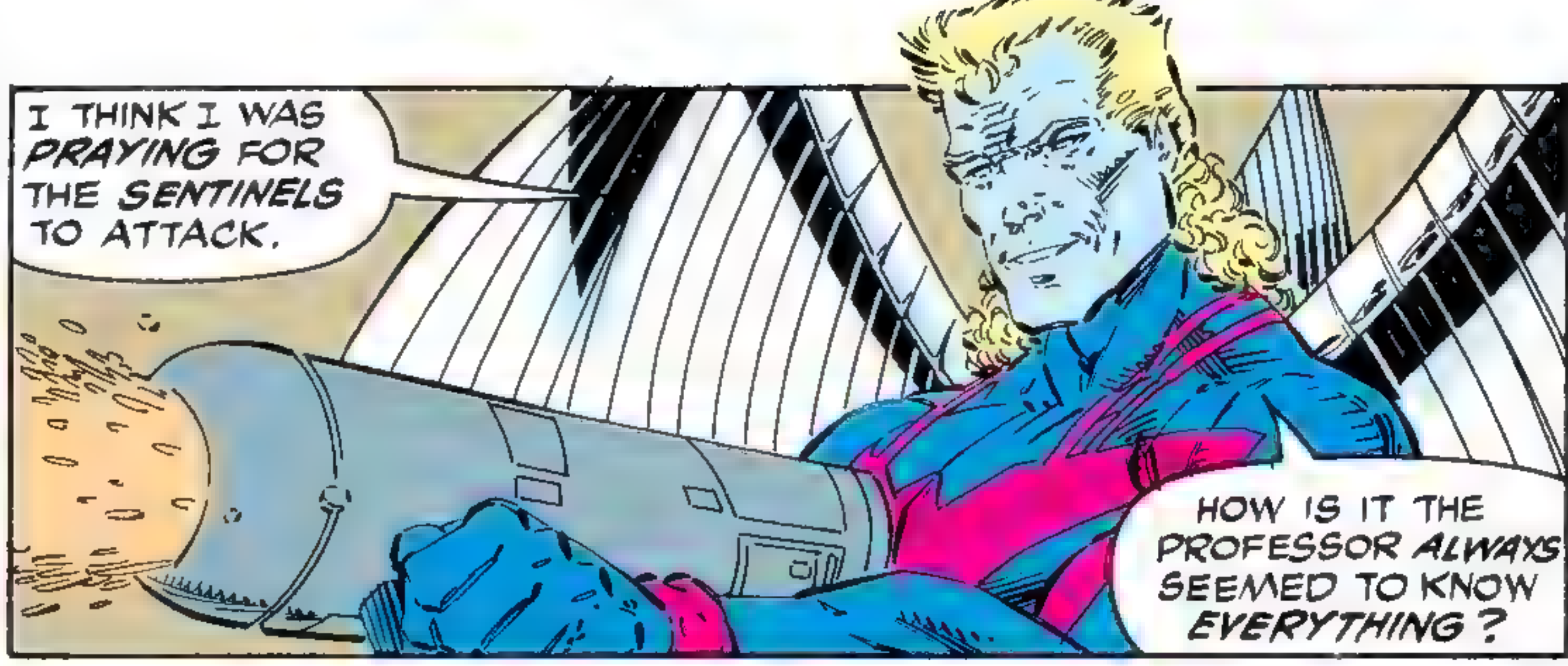
HE CALLED IT "AN EXERCISE IN PSIONIC PROJECTION."



ADMITTEDLY, YOU LOOKED *QUITE* THE *IGNORAMUS*--

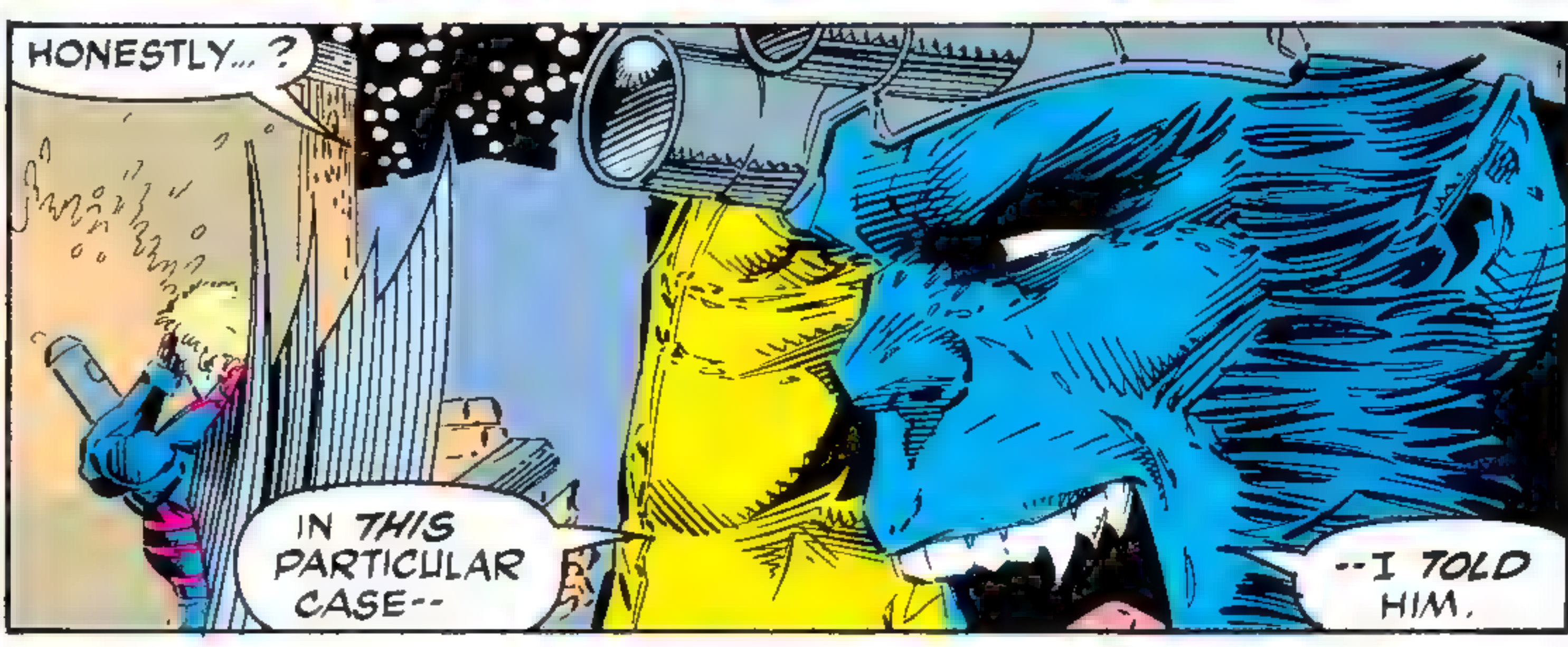
--STANDING IN FRONT OF THE CLASS WITHOUT A *SINGLE* ORIGINAL *THOUGHT* IN YOUR *HEAD*.

WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF "WHY ME?"



I THINK I WAS *PRAYING* FOR THE *SENTINELS* TO *ATTACK*.

HOW IS IT THE PROFESSOR ALWAYS SEEMED TO KNOW *EVERYTHING*?



HONESTLY...?

IN THIS PARTICULAR CASE--

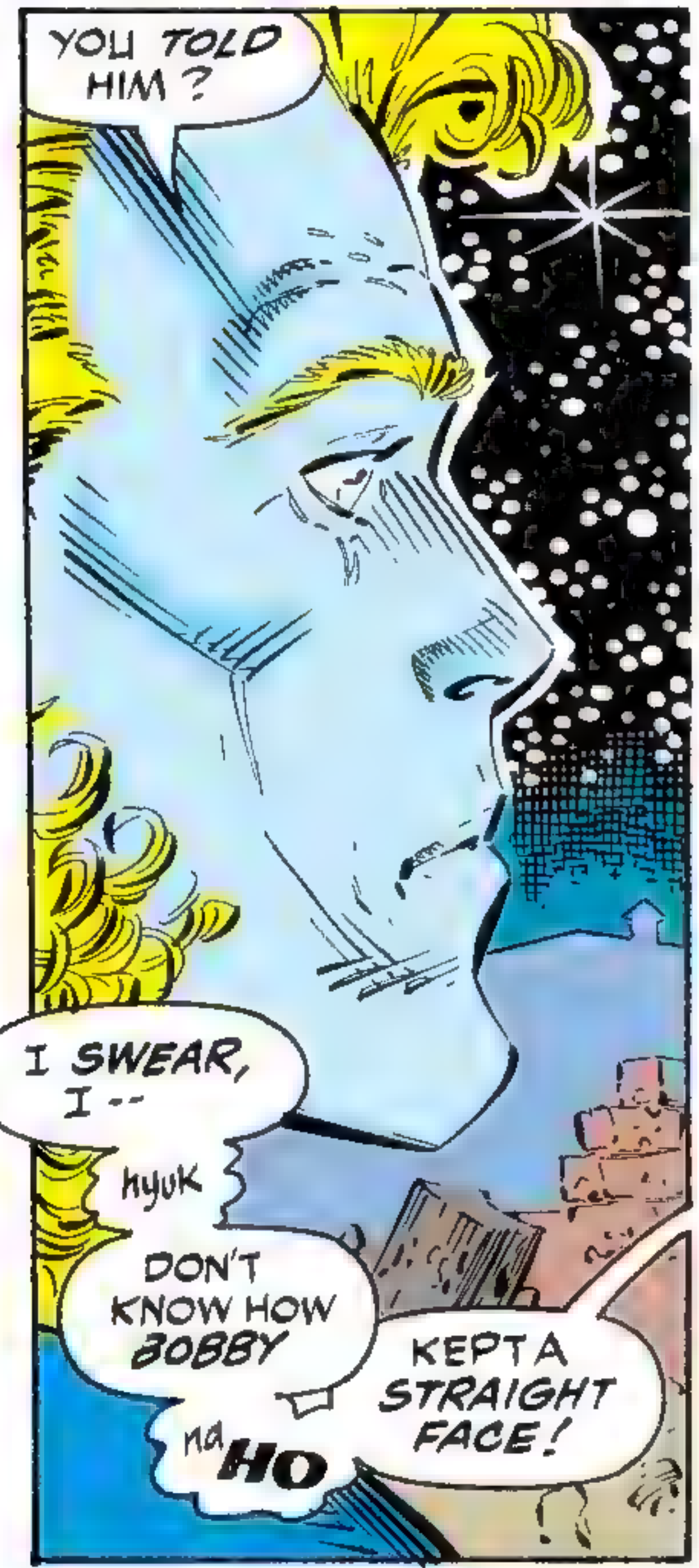
--I TOLD HIM.



YOU TOLD HIM?

BUT... ONLY AFTER I CASHED THE *CHECK!*

hoh *HA* hee
ha ho hah *HA*
heh hee hee *HaHa*



YOU TOLD HIM?

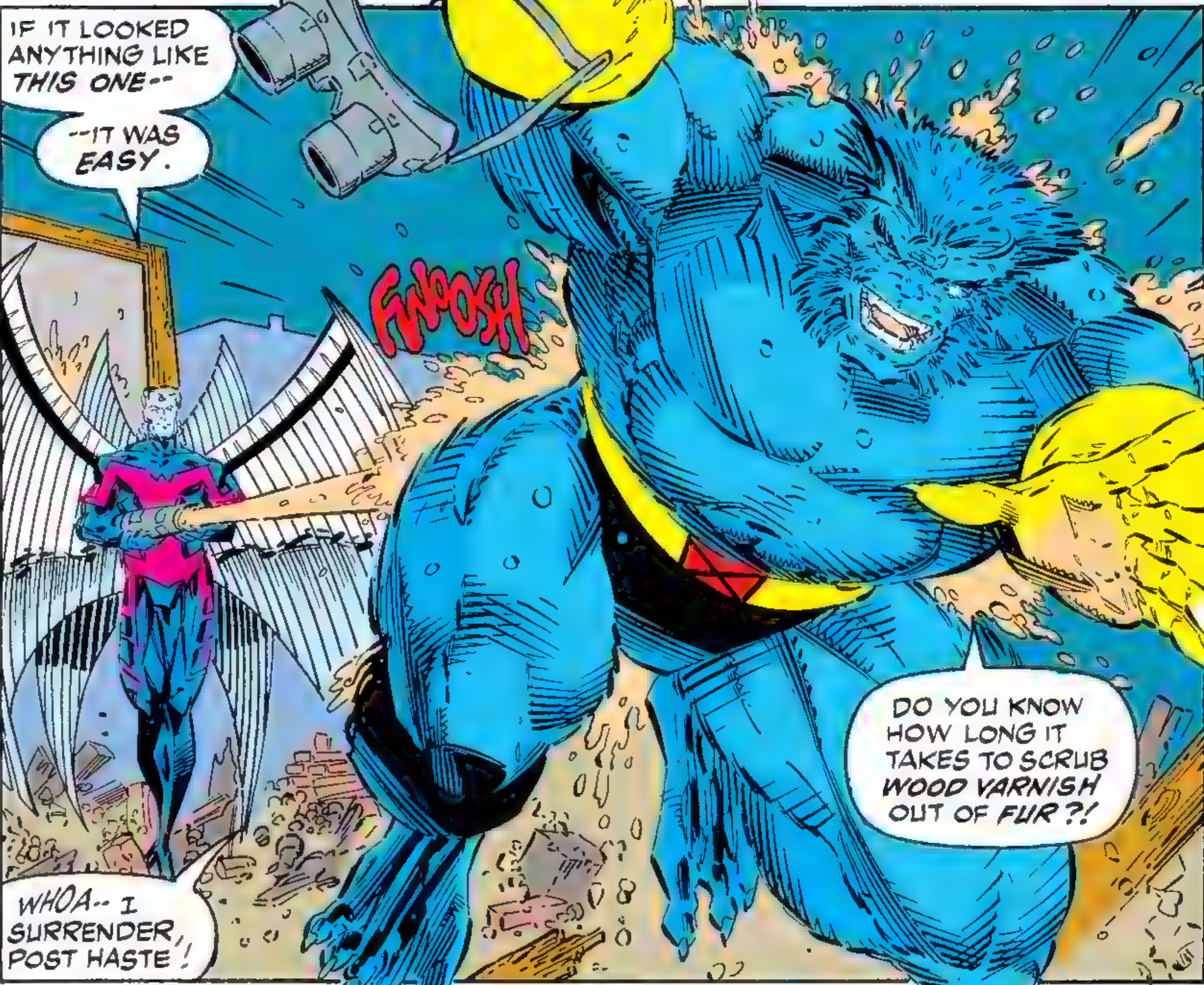
I SWEAR, I--

hyuk

DON'T KNOW HOW *BOBBY*

na *HO*

KEPT A STRAIGHT FACE!



IF IT LOOKED ANYTHING LIKE *THIS ONE*--

--IT WAS *EASY*.

Fwoosh!

WHOA-- I SURRENDER, POST HASTE!

DO YOU KNOW HOW LONG IT TAKES TO SCRUB WOOD VARNISH OUT OF FUR?!

XAVIER'S

LOOK, I
DON'T MEAN
TO BE RUDE...
BUT...

... AREN'T YOU
SUPPOSED TO
BE, LIKE--

-- CRIPPLED ?

NORMALLY,
YES -- I AM
DISABLED.

WHILE I
DON'T UNDER-
STAND THE
SPECIFICS --

-- DR. MACTAGGERT
ASSURES ME THIS IS A
TEMPORARY AFTER-
EFFECT OF STRYFE'S
TECHNO-ORGANIC VIRUS.

UNTIL IT
BURNS ITSELF
OUT...

... A MOMENT
FROM NOW...
AN HOUR,
PERHAPS--

-- I AM ONCE
AGAIN *BLESSED*
WITH THE ABILITY
TO WALK.

I GUESS FOR LIKE
ANYBODY ELSE,
THAT WOULD BE
CRUEL.

BUT YOU... YOU'RE
THE MOST *TIGHTLY*
STITCHED 'DILT
I EVER MET.

I MEAN, *NOT*
WALKING NEVER
SEEMED TO
BOTHER YOU.

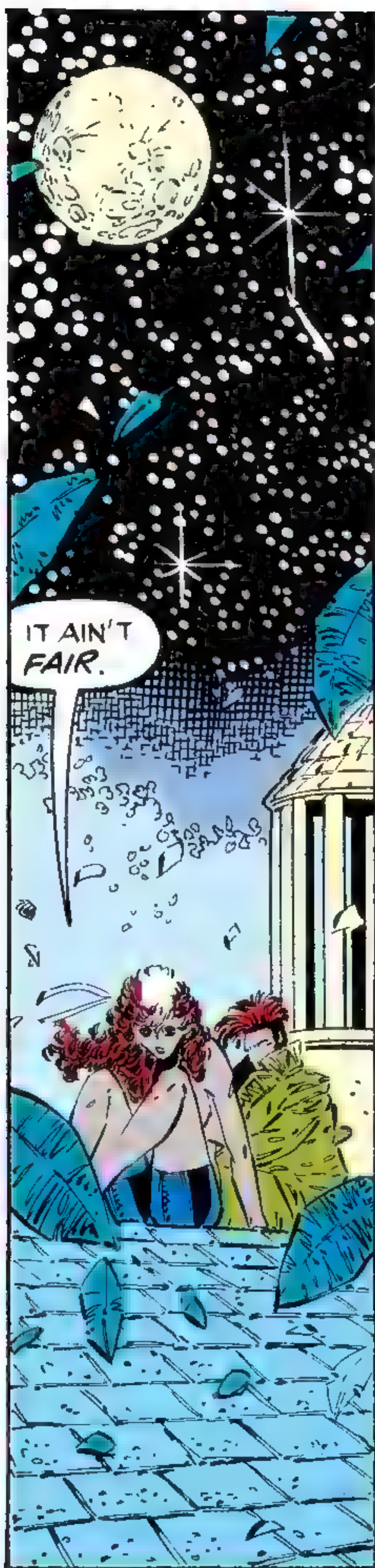
STANDING ?
SITTING ?

I MEAN, YA
STILL GOT THE
MOST POWERFUL
MUTANT *MIND*
IN THE WORLD,
RIGHT ?

THAT'S
GOTTA MEAN
SOMETHING.

NO ?





IT AIN'T FAIR.

AGAIN, AH'M HURT--
SLUGGIN' IT OUT
AGAINST SOME *EQUALLY*
PATHETIC MUTANT...

...FOR A PLACE
IN A WORLD THAT
DOESN'T WANT
ANY OF US.

A WORLD IN
WHICH AH DON'T
EVER HAVE A
CHANCE O' FINDIN'
HAPPINESS.



FINE.
LIFE
AS AN
X-MAN.

AH CAN
DEAL WITH
THAT.

IT'S THE *PERSONAL*
SIDE O' MY LIFE
WHERE EVERYTHING
FALLS APART.

ALL AH
ASK--ALL AH
NEED--
IS SOMEBODY
T'HOLD ME.

STROKE HIS
FINGERS THROUGH
MUH HAIR.

PROMISE ME
THAT *EVERYTHIN'S*
GONNA BE FINE...



...THAT ALL THE *CUTS*
AND *BRUISES* ARE
WORTH IT IN THE
END.

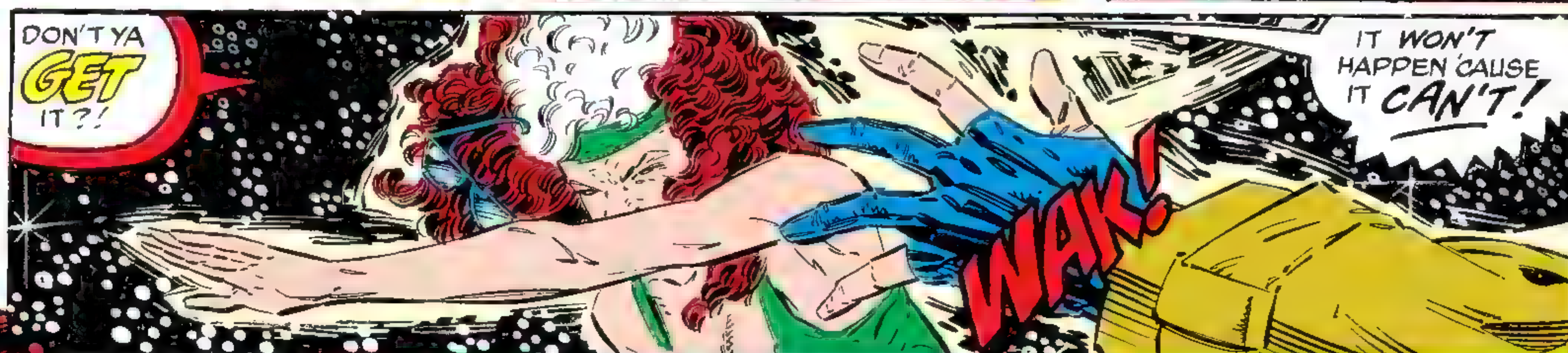
MORE THAN
ANYTHING,
REMY...



...AH WANT THAT
PERSON T'BE
YOU.



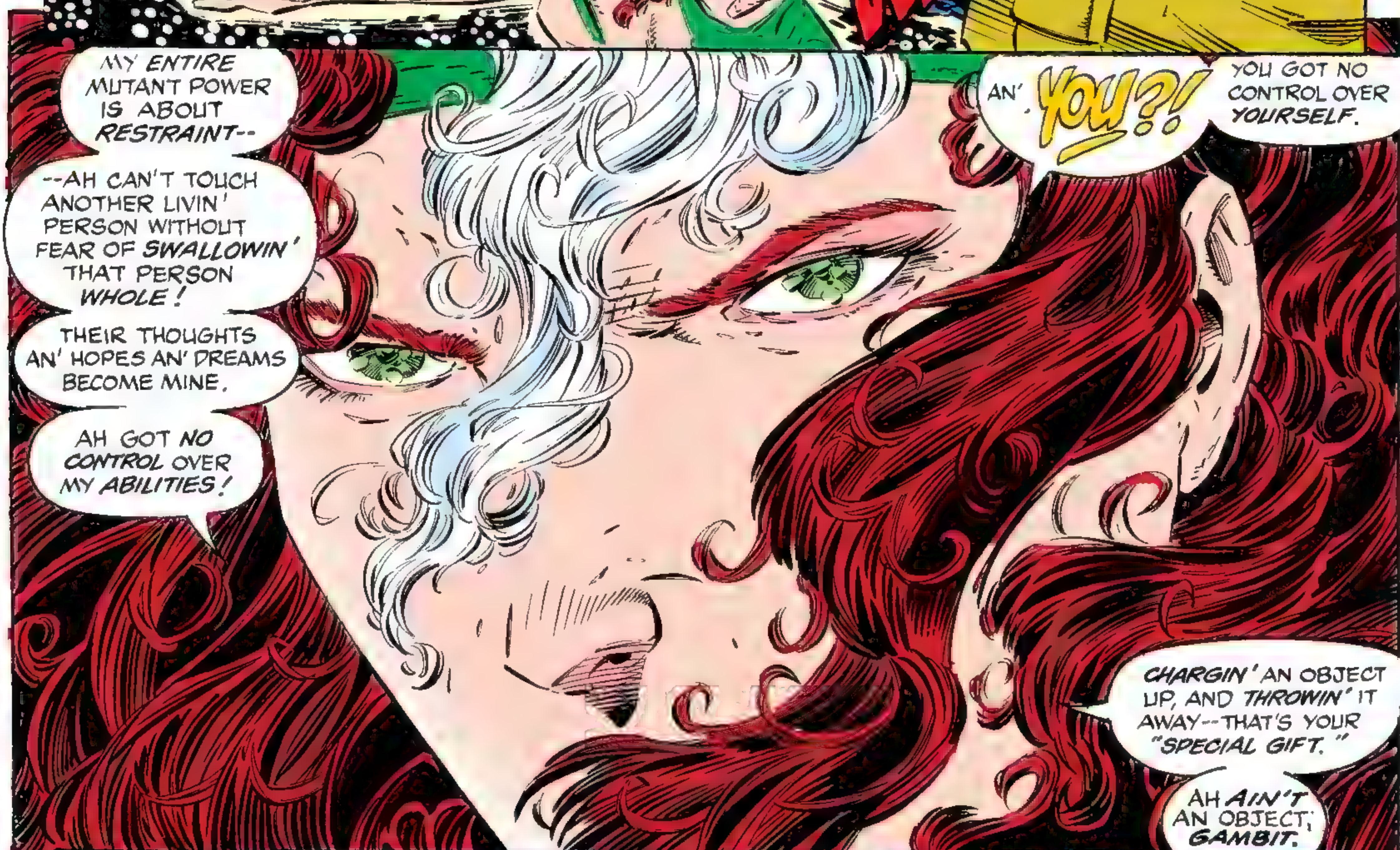
BUT THAT AIN'T NEVER GONNA HAPPEN.



DON'T YA **GET** IT?!

IT WON'T HAPPEN 'CAUSE IT **CAN'T!**

WAK!



MY ENTIRE MUTANT POWER IS ABOUT **RESTRAINT--**

--AH CAN'T TOUCH ANOTHER LIVIN' PERSON WITHOUT FEAR OF **SWALLOWIN'** THAT PERSON **WHOLE!**

THEIR THOUGHTS AN' HOPES AN' DREAMS BECOME MINE.

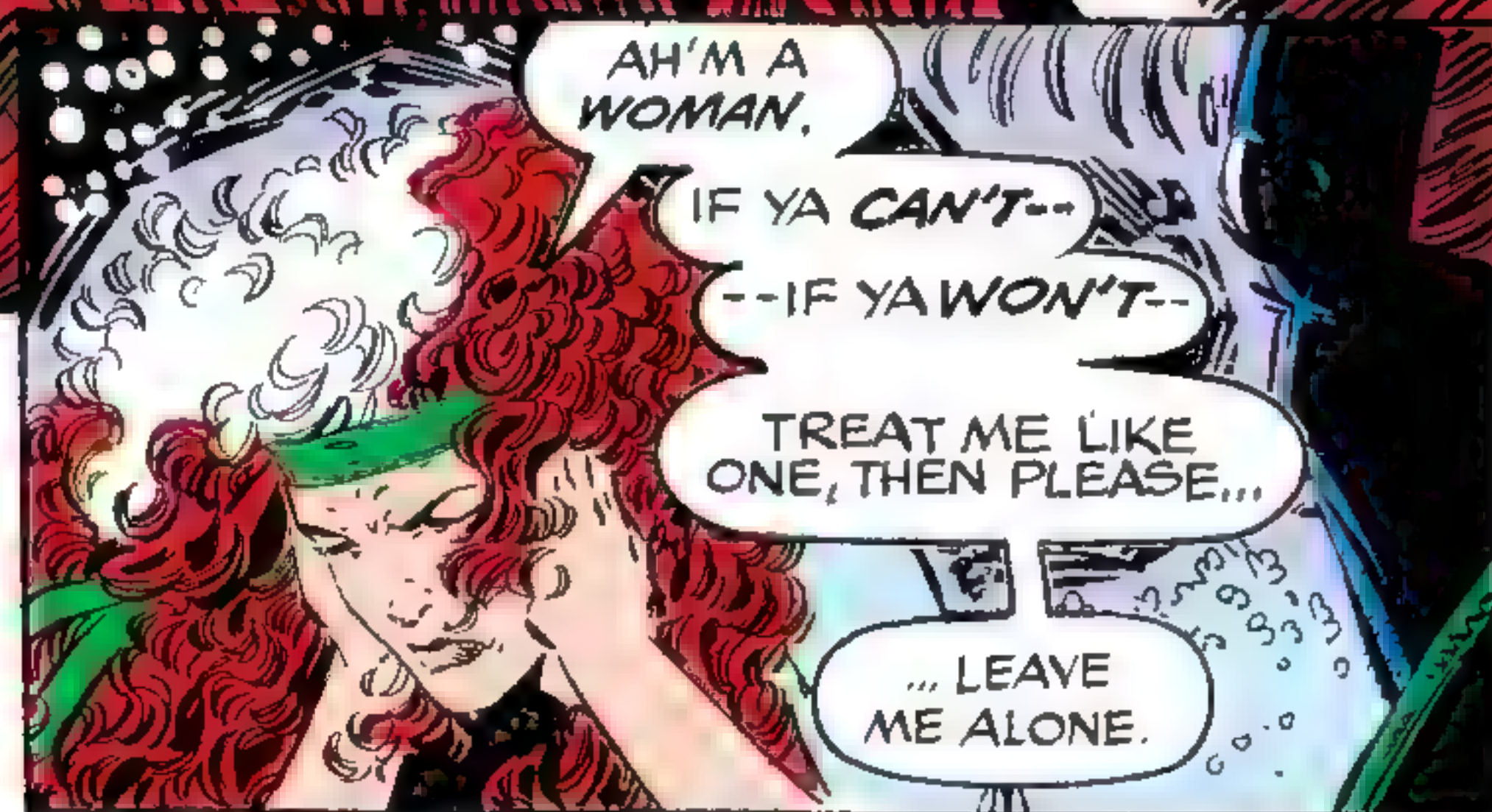
AH GOT NO CONTROL OVER MY ABILITIES!

AN' **YOU?!**

YOU GOT NO CONTROL OVER YOURSELF.

CHARGIN' AN OBJECT UP, AND THROWIN' IT AWAY--THAT'S YOUR "SPECIAL GIFT."

AH **AIN'T** AN OBJECT, **GAMBIT.**



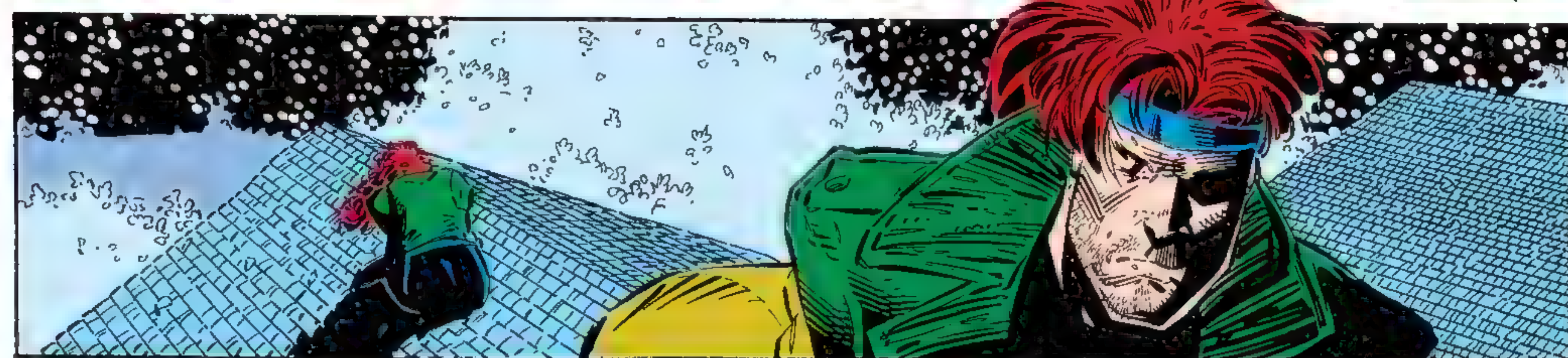
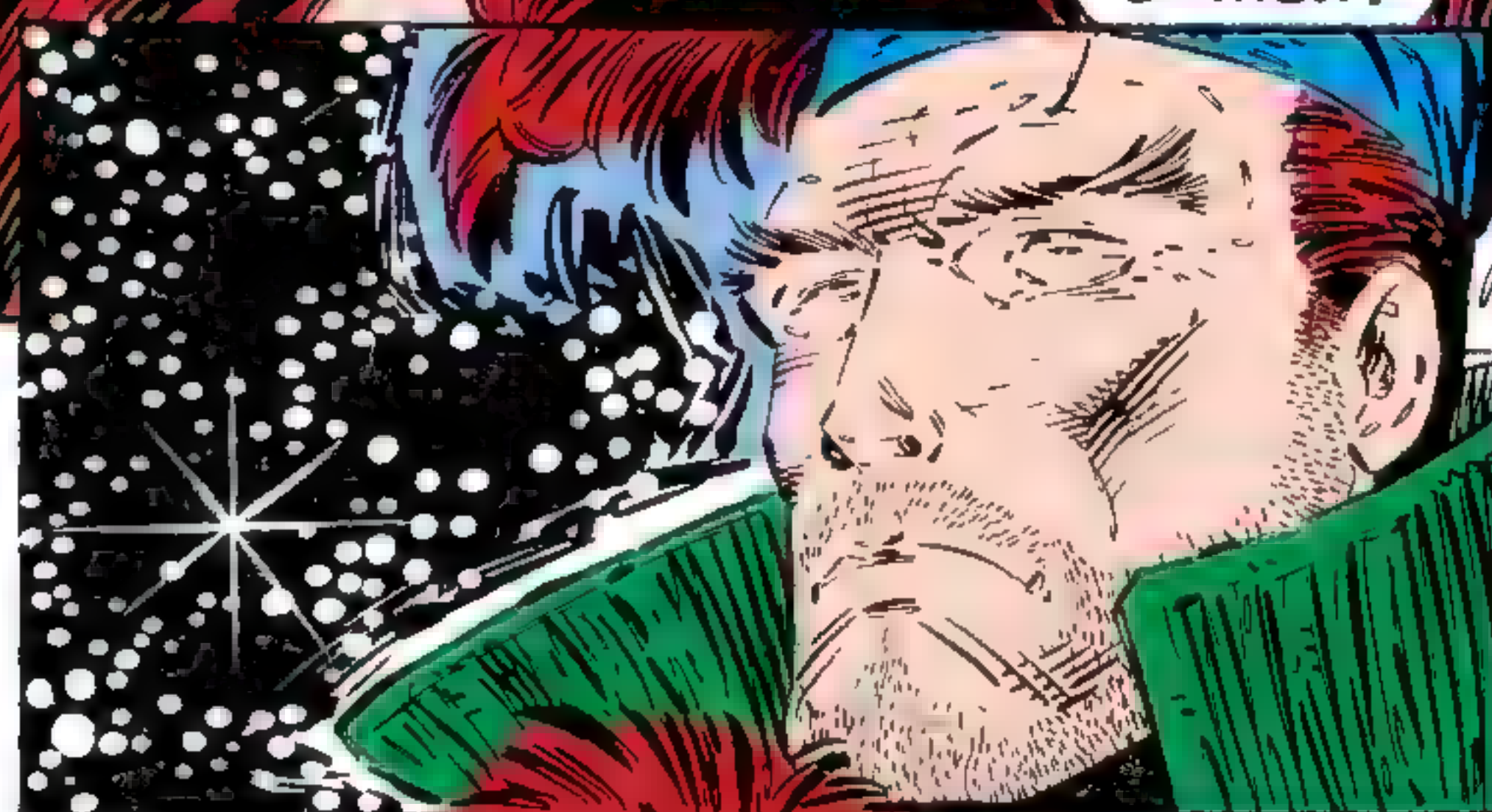
AH'M A **WOMAN.**

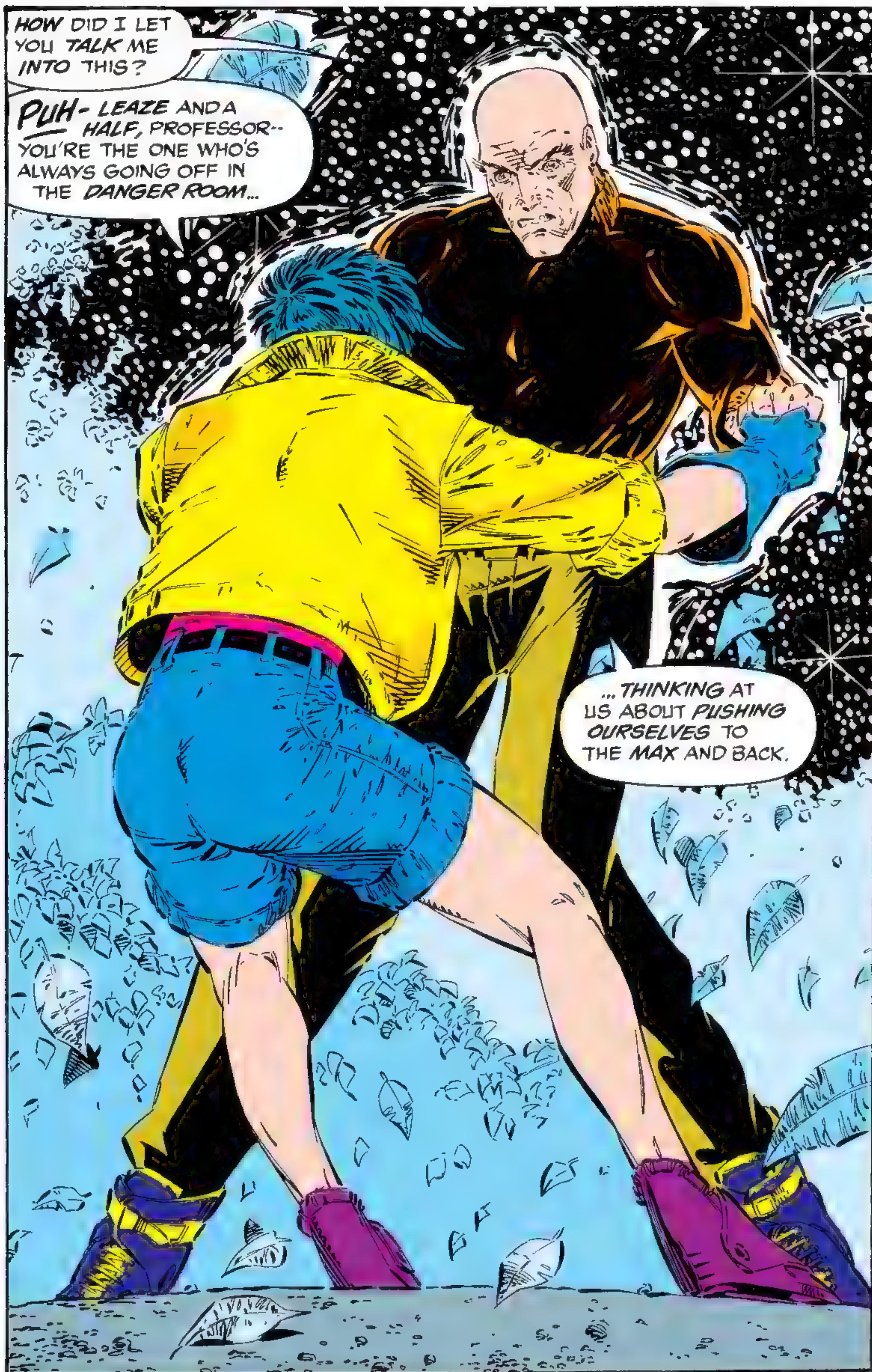
IF YA **CAN'T--**

--IF YA **WON'T--**

TREAT ME LIKE ONE, THEN PLEASE...

... **LEAVE ME ALONE.**

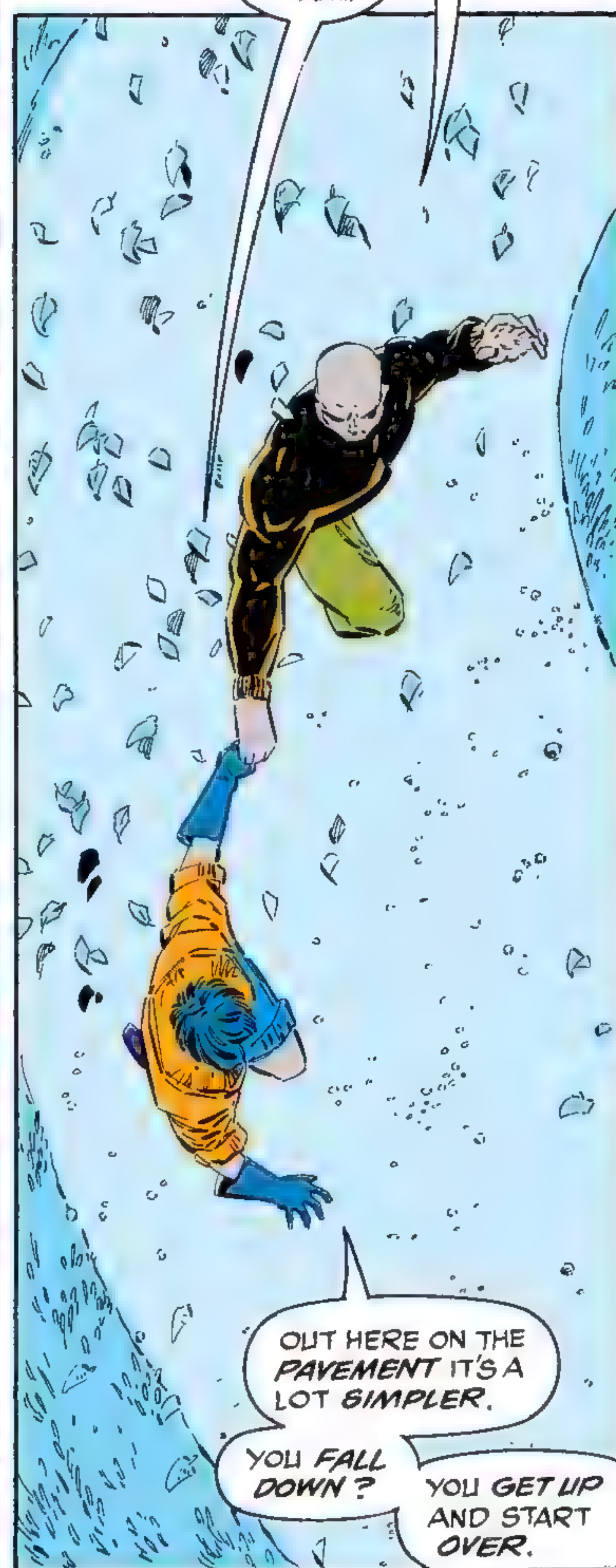




HOW DID I LET
YOU TALK ME
INTO THIS?

PUH- LEAZE AND A
HALF, PROFESSOR--
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S
ALWAYS GOING OFF IN
THE DANGER ROOM...

... THINKING AT
US ABOUT PUSHING
OURSELVES TO
THE MAX AND BACK.



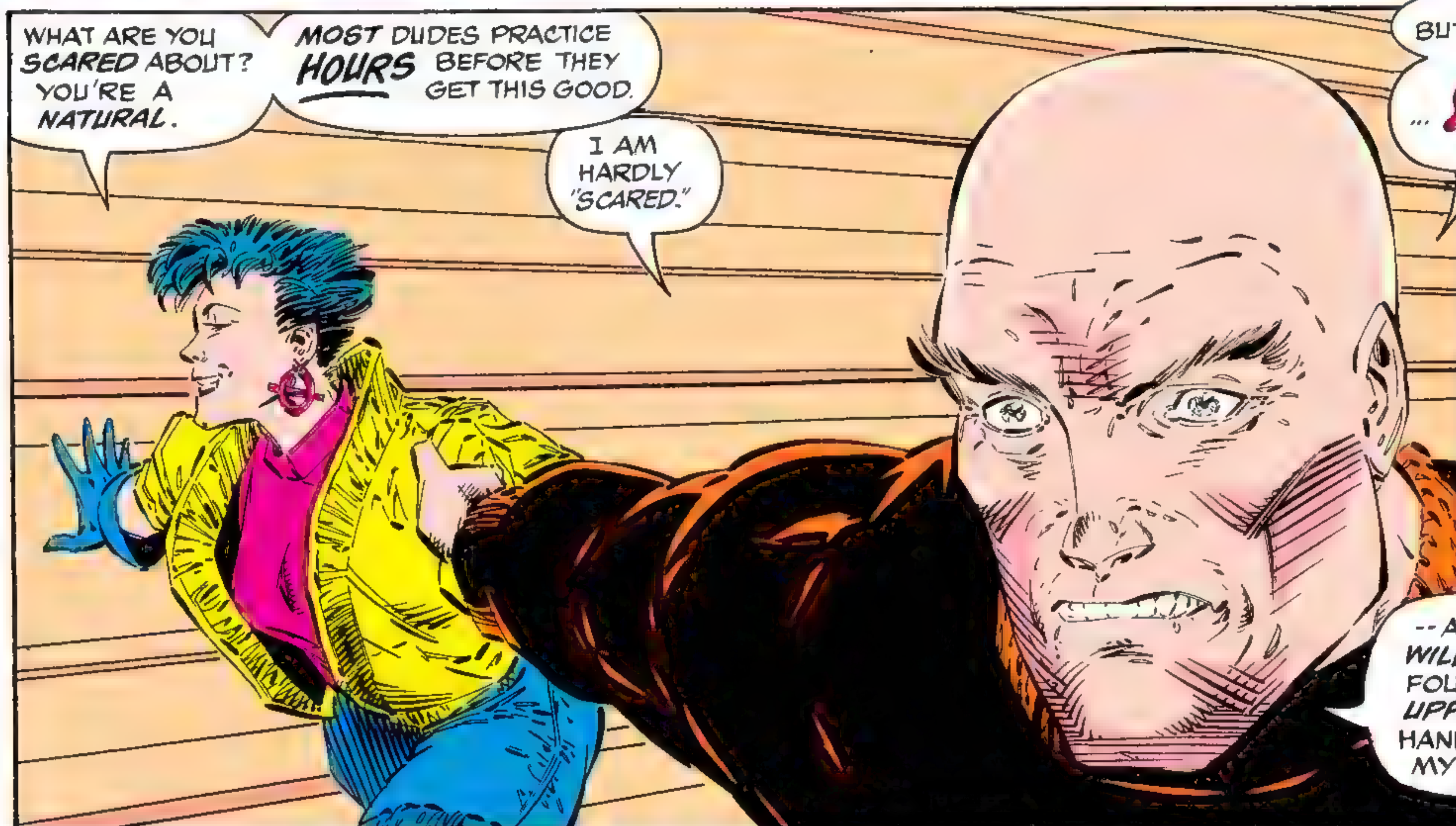
THAT IS DIFFERENT,
CHILD. THE DANGER
ROOM IS A CONTROLLED
ENVIRONMENT WITH AN
ELABORATE INFRA-
STRUCTURE OF SAFE-
GUARDS AND

YEAH,
YEAH,
YEAH...

OUT HERE ON THE
PAVEMENT IT'S A
LOT SIMPLER.

YOU FALL
DOWN?

YOU GET UP
AND START
OVER.



WHAT ARE YOU
SCARED ABOUT?
YOU'RE A
NATURAL.

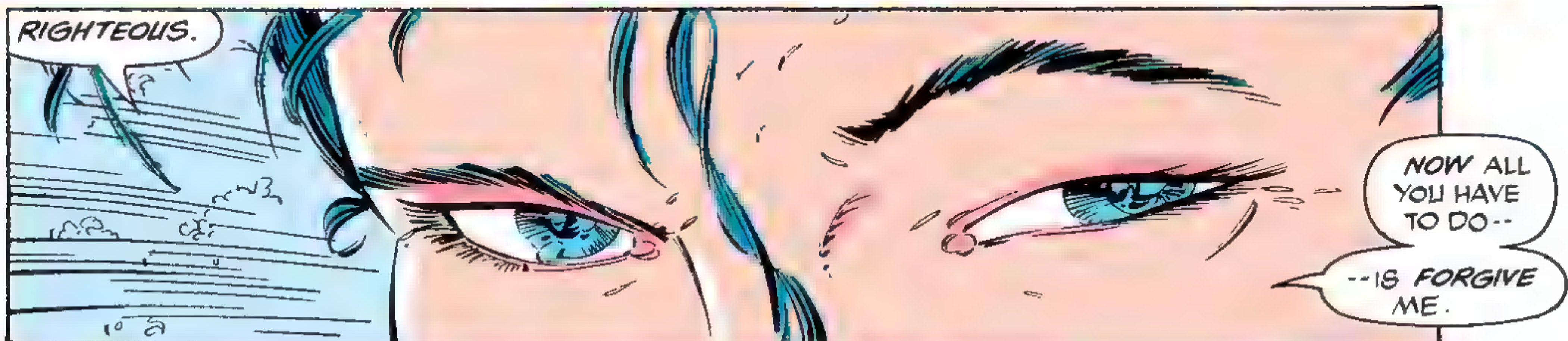
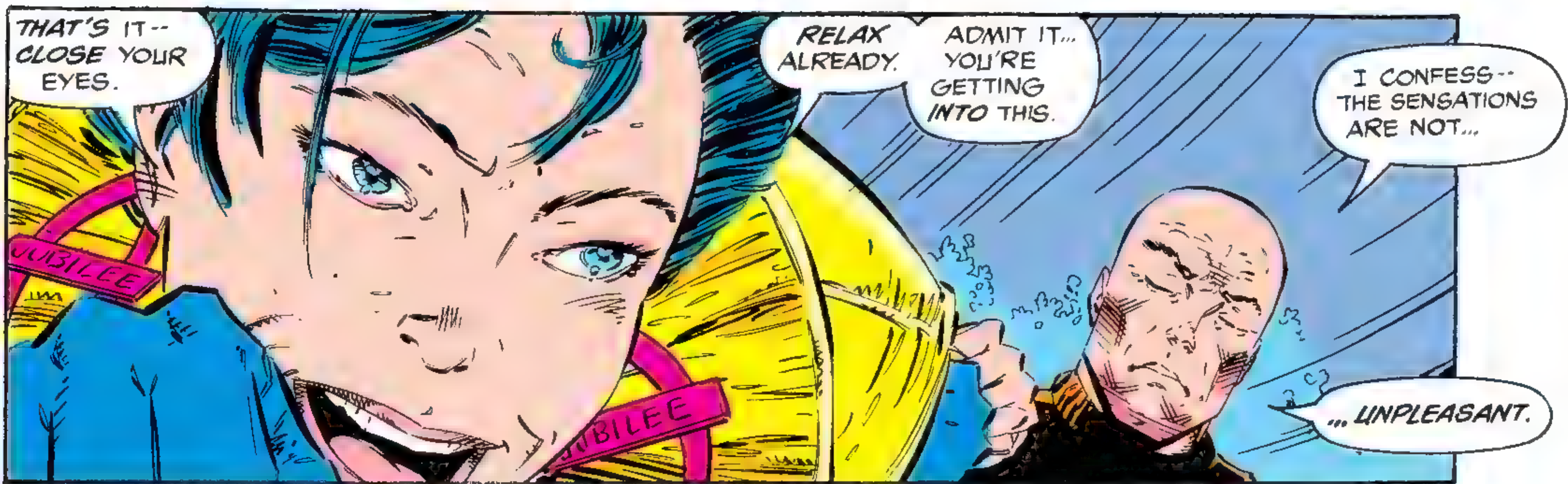
MOST DUDES PRACTICE
HOURS BEFORE THEY
GET THIS GOOD.

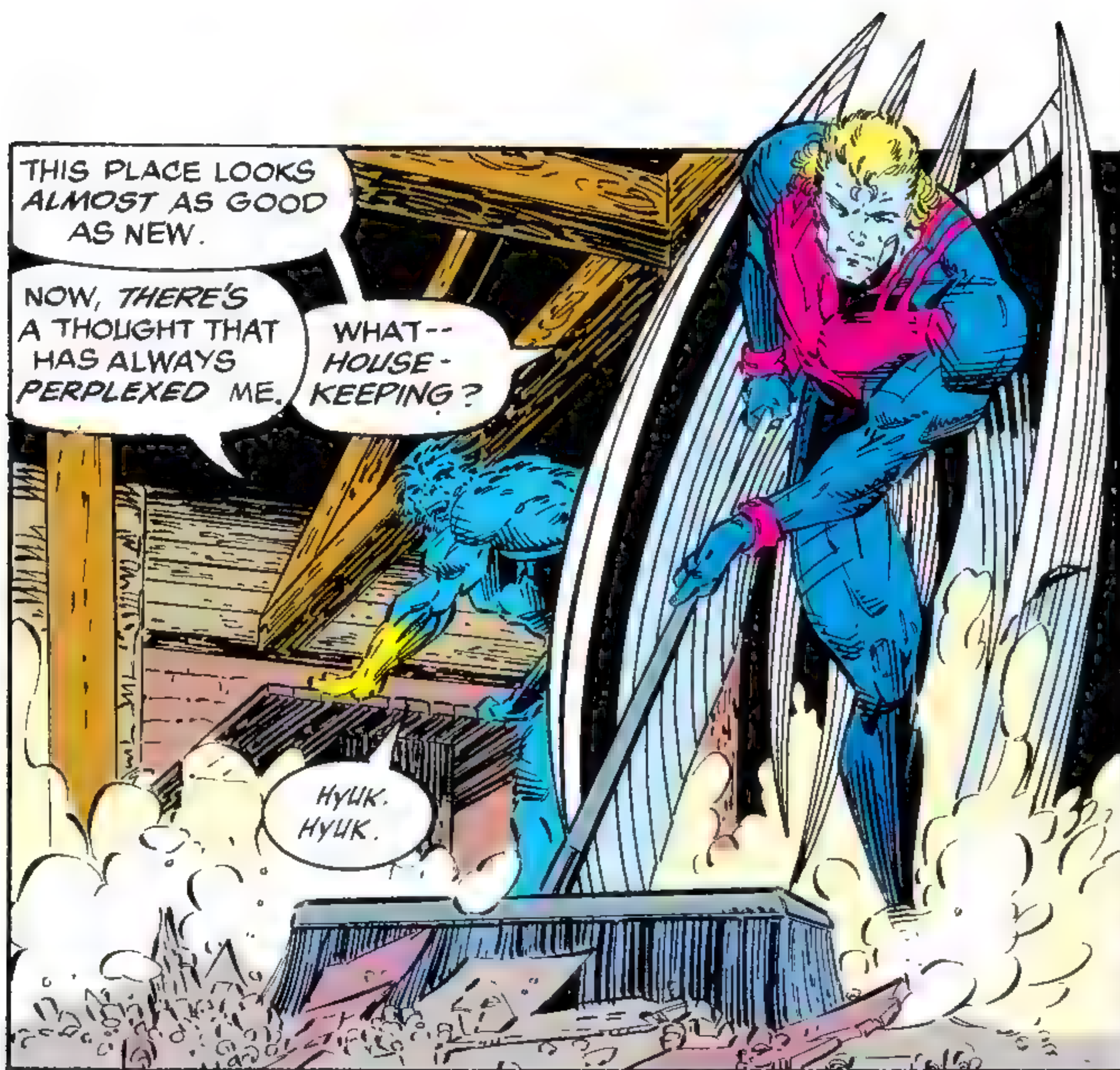
I AM
HARDLY
"SCARED."

BUT...

... **SHOULD**
I DIE--

-- A COPY OF MY
WILL CAN BE
FOUND IN THE
UPPER RIGHT-
HAND DRAWER IN
MY STUDY.





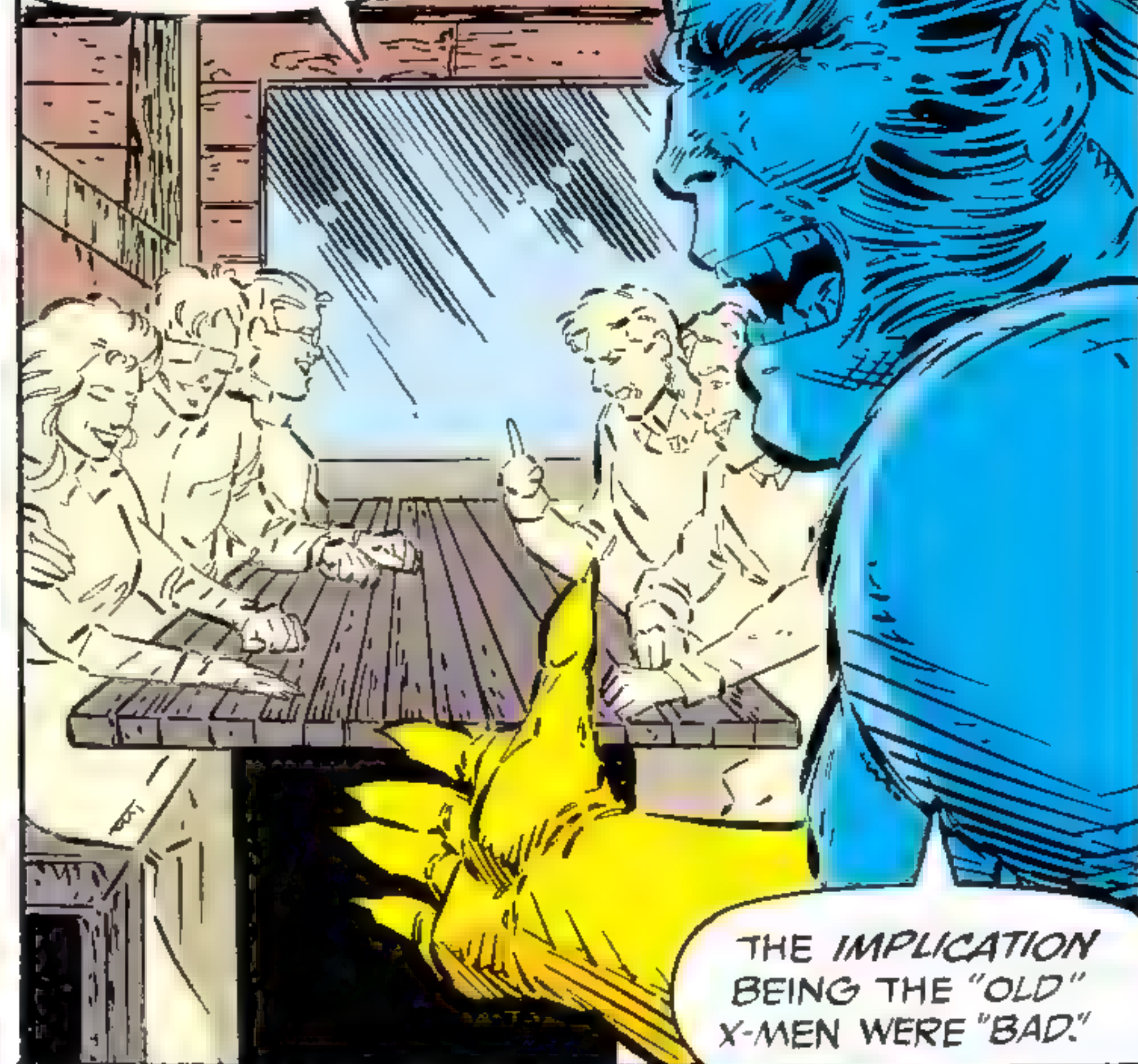
THIS PLACE LOOKS ALMOST AS GOOD AS NEW.

NOW, THERE'S A THOUGHT THAT HAS ALWAYS PERPLEXED ME.

WHAT-- HOUSE-KEEPING?

HYUK. HYUK.

I WAS REFERRING TO PEOPLE'S PROPENSITY TO EQUATE "GOOD" WITH "NEW."



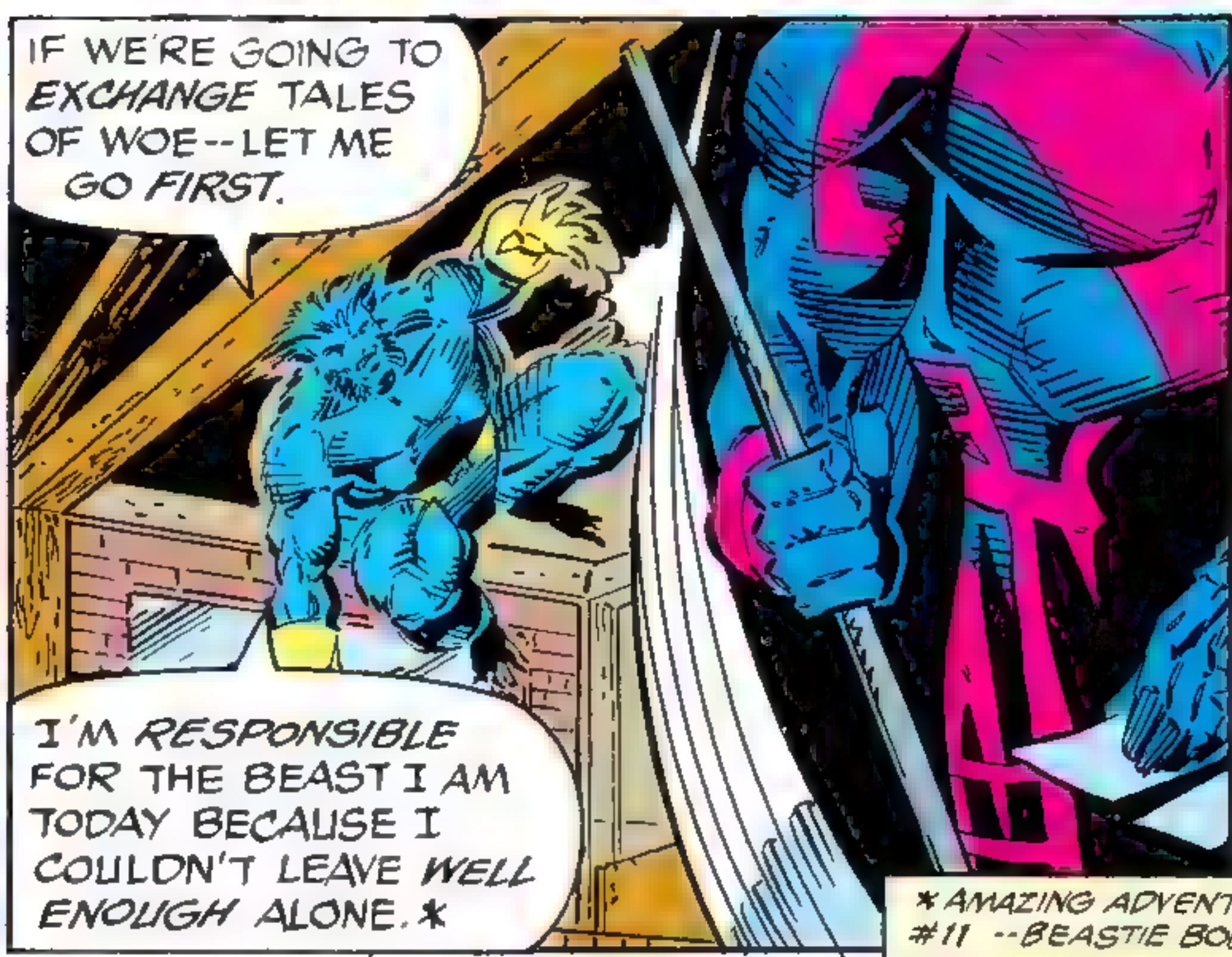
THE IMPLICATION BEING THE "OLD" X-MEN WERE "BAD."



ME? I'D GO BACK TO THE OLD DAYS IN A HEARTBEAT.

WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT THE DAY WOULD EVER COME THAT I'D ACTUALLY **MISS** BEING A SELF-ABSORBED BOY MILLIONAIRE?

PITY ALERT! PITY ALERT!



IF WE'RE GOING TO EXCHANGE TALES OF WOE--LET ME GO FIRST.

I'M RESPONSIBLE FOR THE BEAST I AM TODAY BECAUSE I COULDN'T LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE.*

*AMAZING ADVENTURES #11 --BEASTIE BOB



CONVERSELY, YOUR CURRENT CONDITION WAS SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED **TO** YOU.

O.K.-- SO IT TOOK YOU A WHILE TO GET A HANDLE ON THINGS...

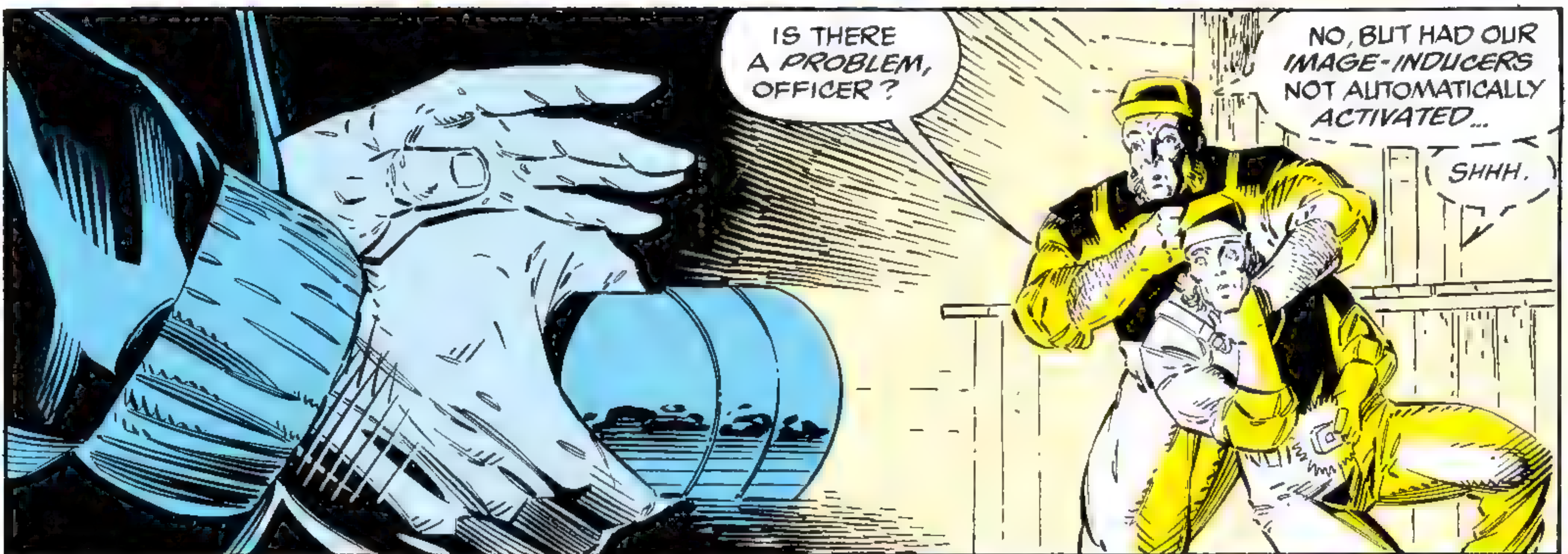
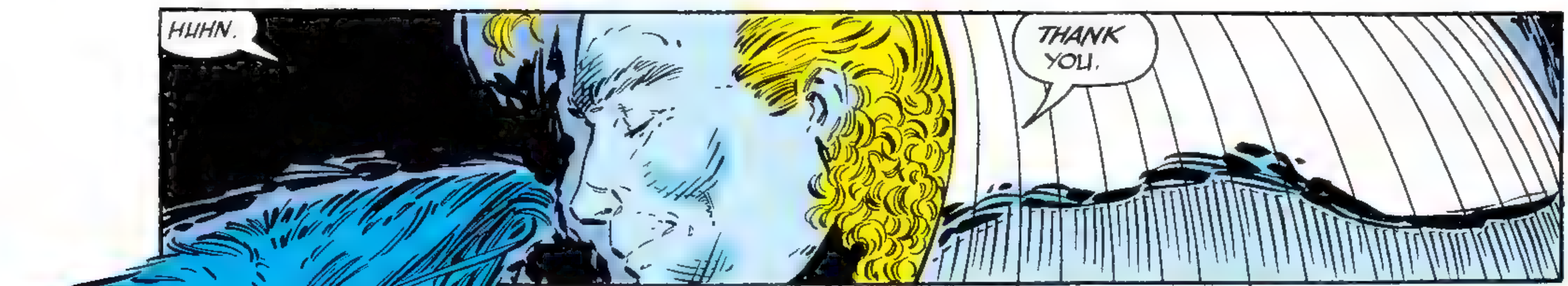
... THE POINT IS, YOU DIDN'T LET IT DESTROY YOU. YOU EVEN CAME THROUGH IT ALL A STRONGER PERSON.

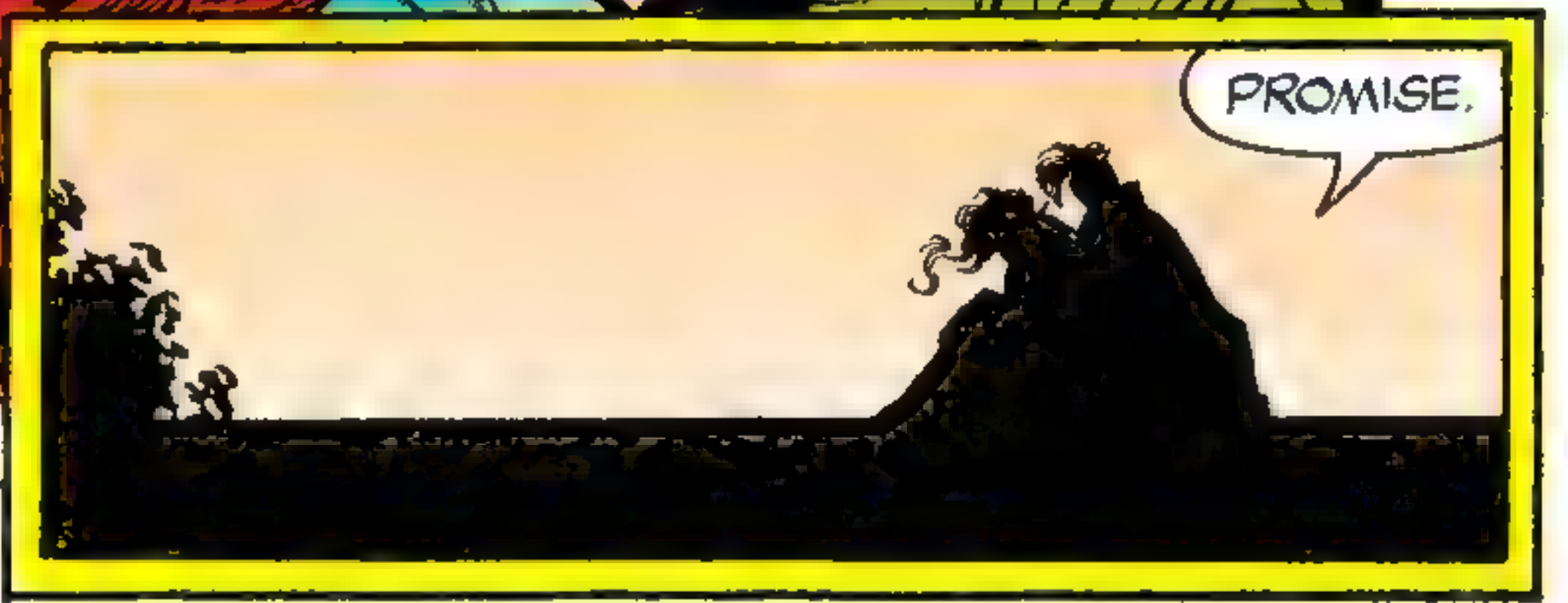
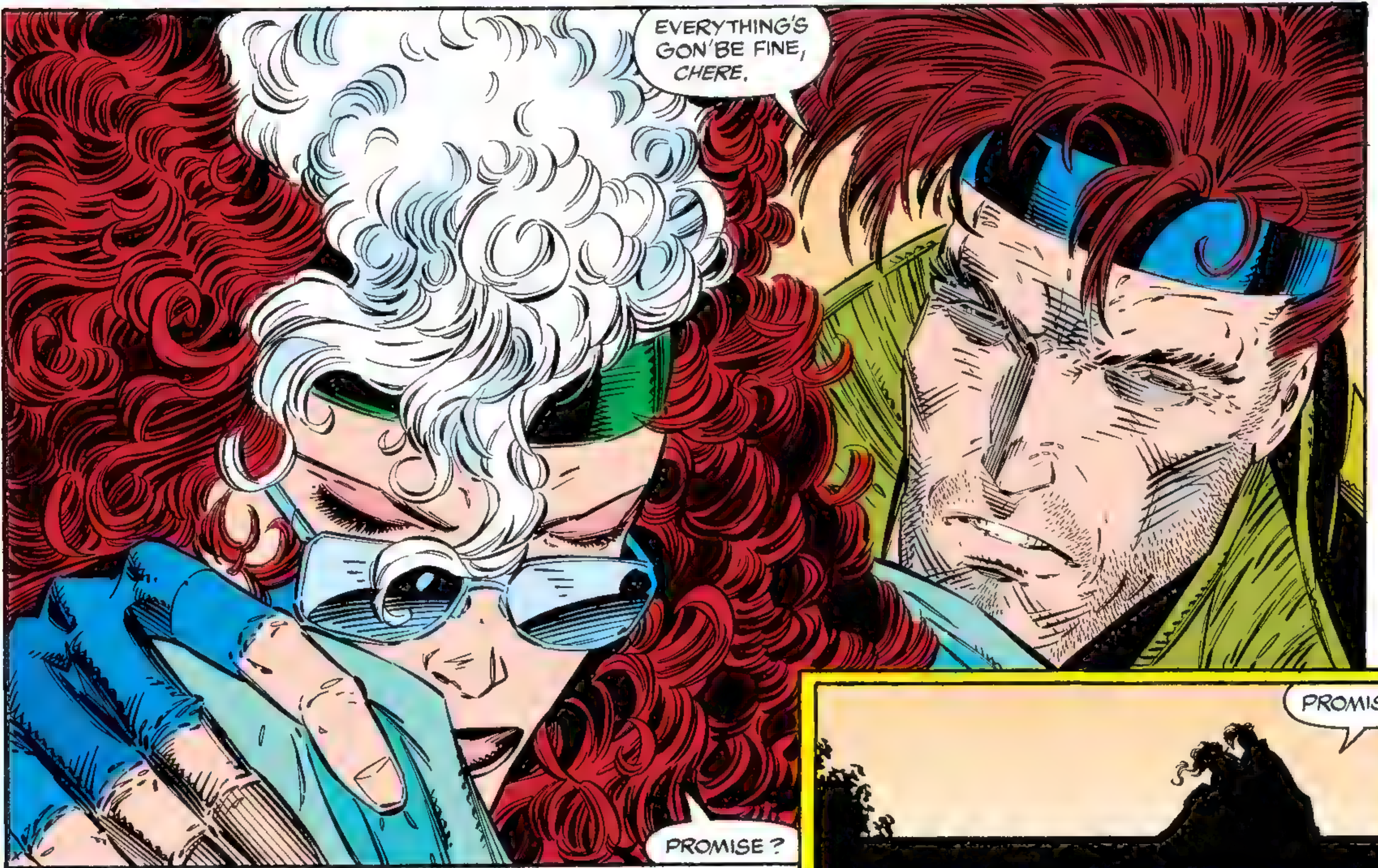
ABSITIVELY POSOLLITELY.

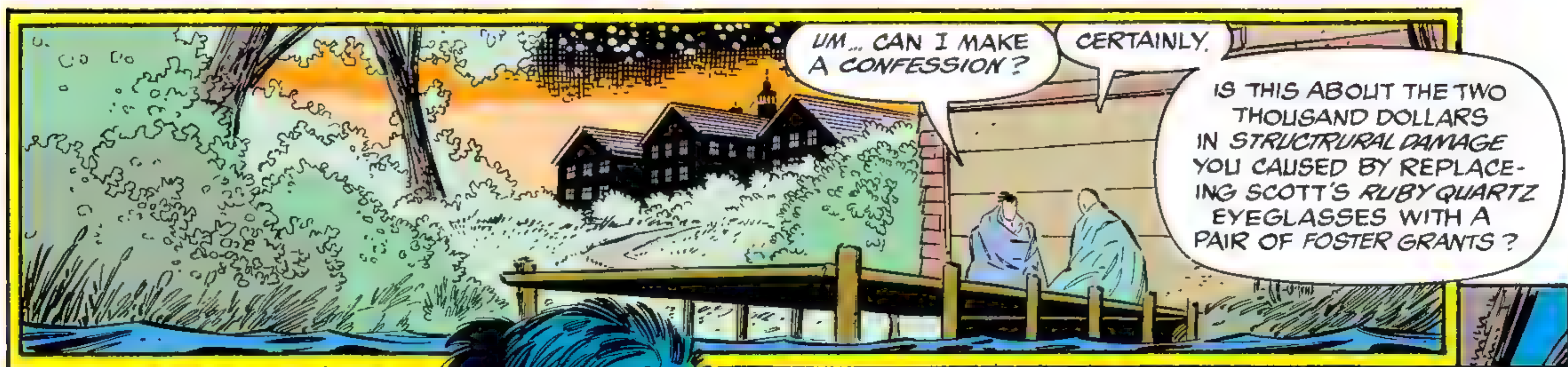
YOU REALLY THINK SO?



I CAN'T THINK OF A PERSON I RESPECT MORE THAN YOU, WARREN.







UM... CAN I MAKE
A CONFESSION?

CERTAINLY.

IS THIS ABOUT THE TWO
THOUSAND DOLLARS
IN *STRUCTURAL DAMAGE*
YOU CAUSED BY REPLAC-
ING SCOTT'S *RUBY QUARTZ*
EYEGLASSES WITH A
PAIR OF FOSTER GRANTS?

THAT,
TOO.

BUT, I JUST
WANTED TO
SAY-- WELL...

...YOU'VE NEVER BEEN,
LIKE, MY FAVORITE
PERSON.

I ALWAYS THOUGHT YOUR
LIFE WAS JUST ABOUT
HASSLIN' WOLVERINE.

AND THIS "TRAINING! TRAINING!
TRAINING!" RIFF IN THE DANGER
ROOM...?

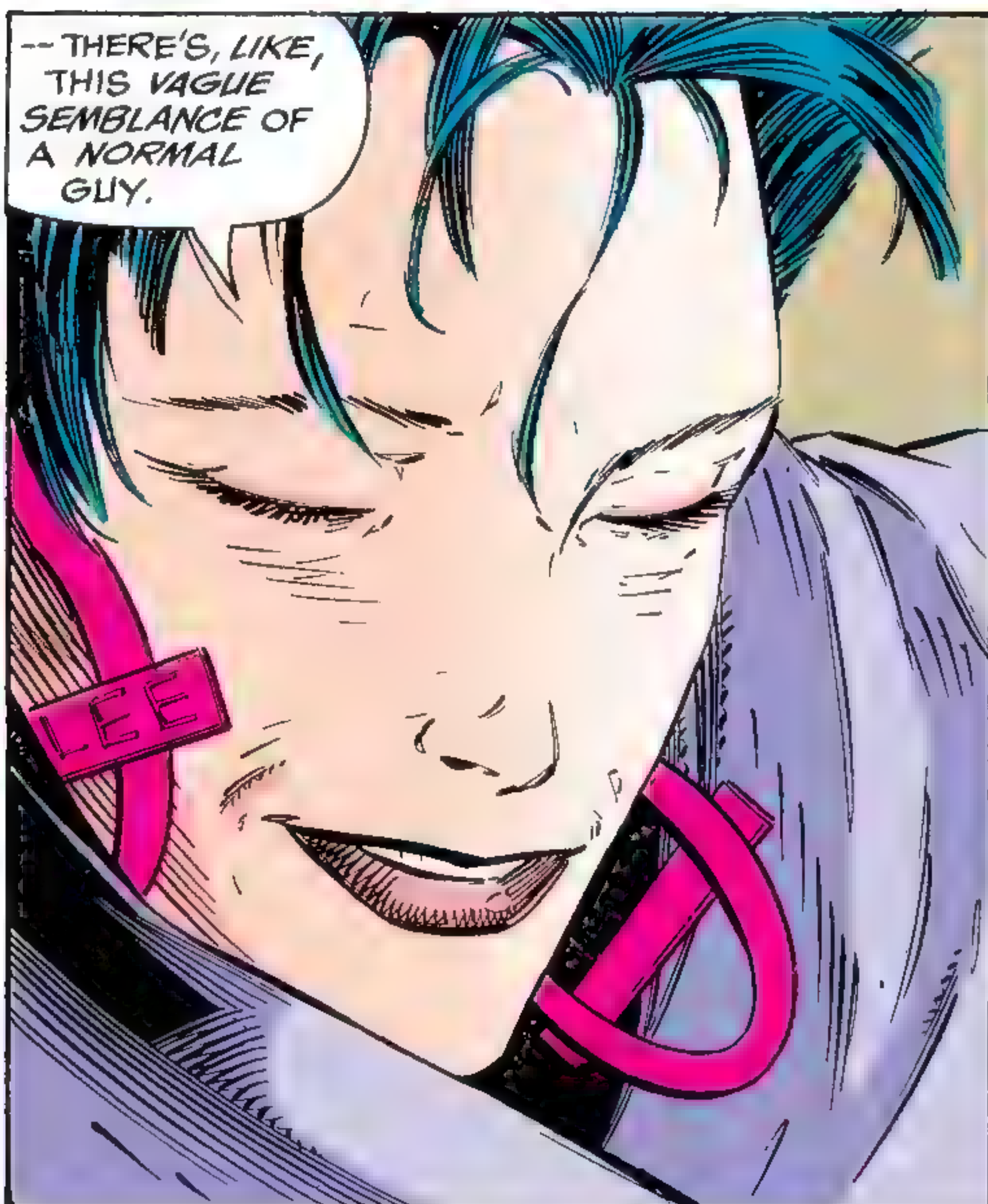
... GETS REALLY
PLAYED, REALLY
QUICKLY.

YOUR
POINT,
CHILD?

I GUESS
WHAT I'M SAYIN'
IS...

... I MEAN, JUST
HANGING WITH YOU
AND STUFF...

... IT'S NICE TO
KNOW THAT *UNDER-*
NEATH IT ALL--



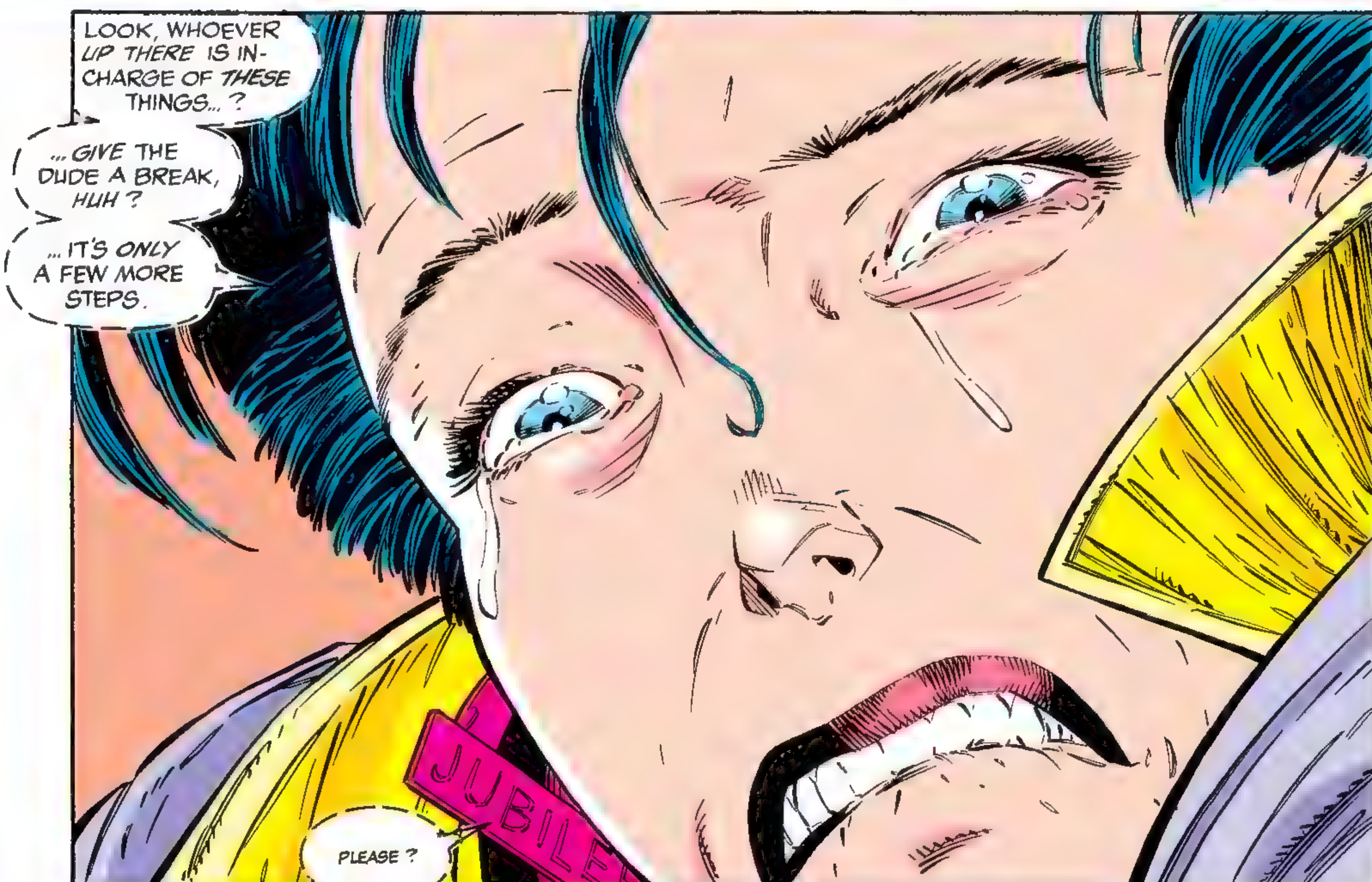
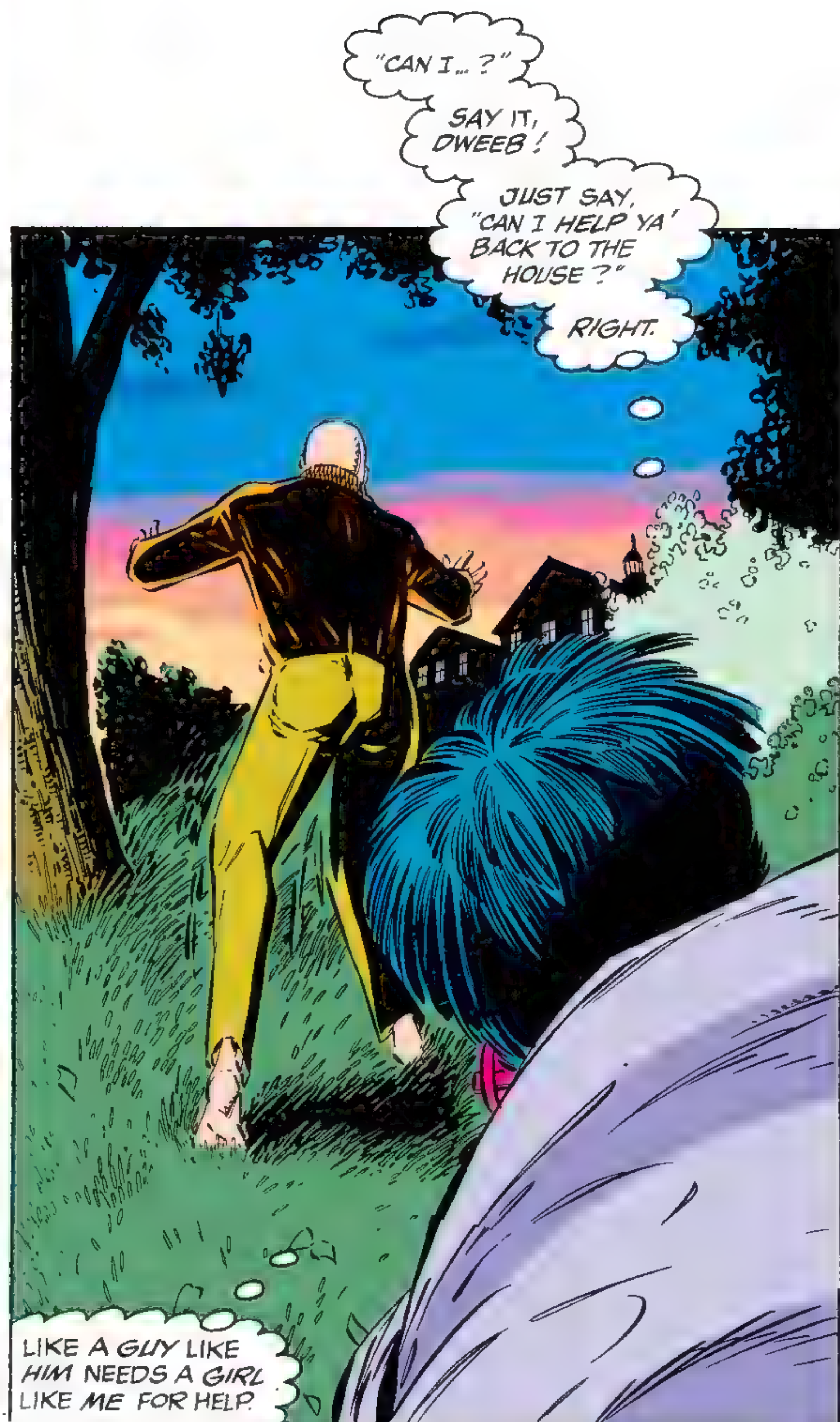
-- THERE'S, LIKE,
THIS VAGUE
SEMBLANCE OF
A NORMAL
GUY.



ASSUMING
THAT WAS A
COMPLIMENT...

... THANK
YOU.

IT'S BEEN A LONG
TIME SINCE
SOMEONE ACCUSED
ME OF BEING
"NORMAL."





SHE DOESN'T
EXPECT A
REPLY.



BUT SHE RECEIVES
ONE NONETHELESS.



NOT WITH A
PARTING OF
THE CLOUDS--

--OR IN A BRILLIANT
FLASH OF LIGHTNING
FROM ON HIGH.



RATHER IN THE
ACTIONS OF A
SINGLE MAN.



IN THAT
MOMENT--

--JUBILEE REALIZES
SHE DOESN'T NEED
TO SAY THE WORDS
ALoud.

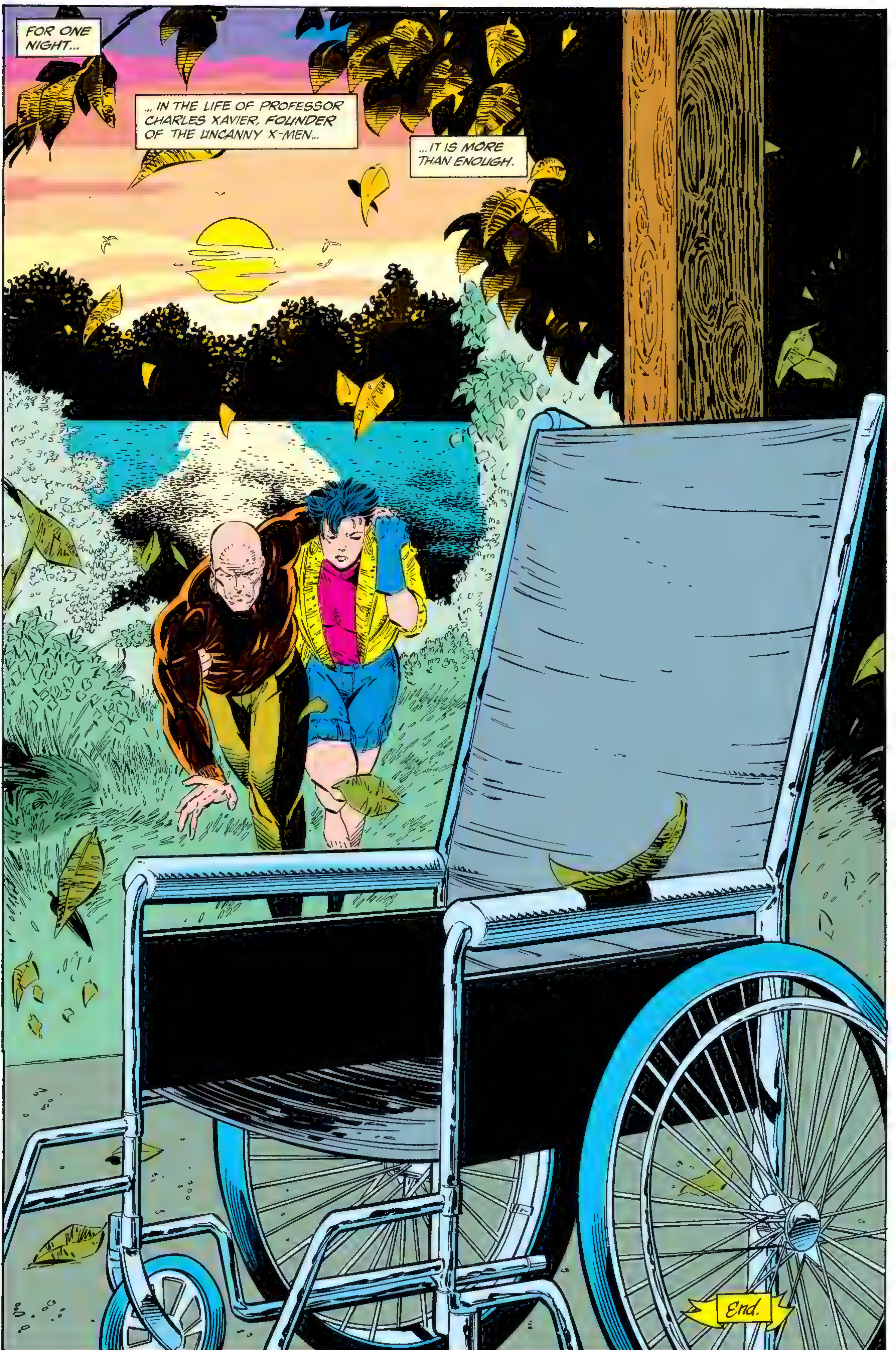


SHE ONLY NEEDS
TO BE THERE.

FOR ONE
NIGHT...

... IN THE LIFE OF PROFESSOR
CHARLES XAVIER, FOUNDER
OF THE UNCANNY X-MEN...

... IT IS MORE
THAN ENOUGH.



End.

MARVEL
COMICS

A LOOK
INTO THE
MIND OF THE
VILLAIN
BEHIND
X-CUTIONER'S
SONG

\$1.75 US
\$2.25 CAN
#1
01220

APPROVED
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COMICS
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STORM

STRIKE FILE

AN X-CUTIONER'S SONG™ ADDENDUM



SPECIAL
X-MEN
COLLECTABLE!

Andy Kubert
+
Mark Pennington



MARVEL COMICS

A LOOK INTO THE MIND OF THE **VILLAIN** BEHIND **X-CUTIONER'S SONG**

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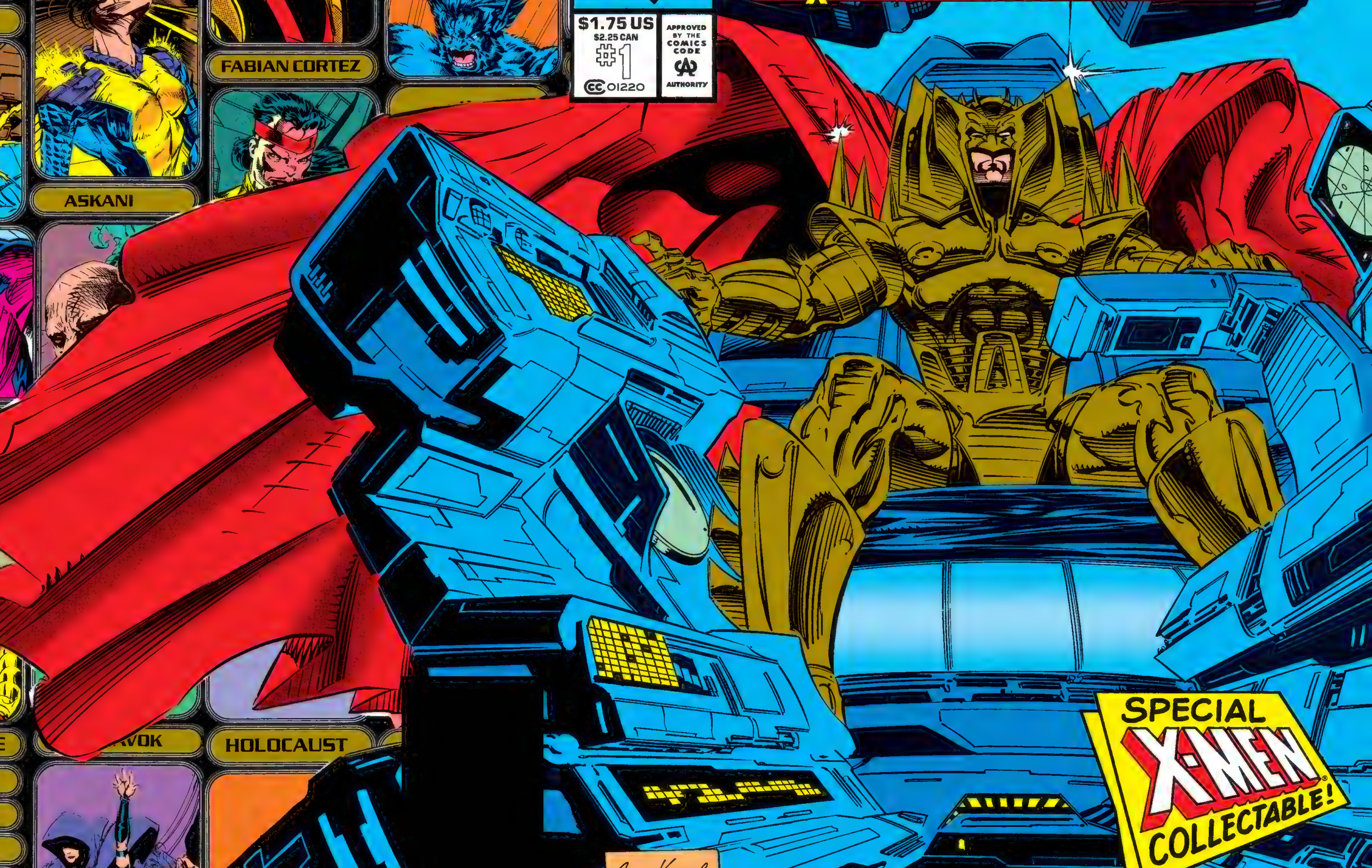
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STORM

STRIKE FILE

AN X-CUTIONER'S SONG ADDENDUM



SPECIAL
X-MEN
COLLECTABLE!

Andy Kubert
Mark Pennington

AFTERNOON AT THE SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS IN WESTCHESTER, NEW YORK.

A BRISK AUTUMN WIND WHIPS THROUGH THE DYING LEAVES --

--THE RUSTLING, CHAFING SOUND CARRIES THROUGH THE OPENED WINDOW OF CHARLES XAVIER'S STUDY.

FOR A MOMENT, THE NOISE REMINDS XAVIER OF A GER-SHWIN SONG.

HE HUMS THE MELODY, THEN REALIZES HE HASN'T SUNG FOR A LONG TIME.

HIS MOTHER USED TO LOVE HIS VOICE BEFORE PUBERTY SET IN... AND HIS VOICE CHANGED... ALONG WITH OTHER THINGS...

XAVIER IS A MUTANT. BORN WITH TELEPATHIC ABILITIES WHICH MANIFESTED THEMSELVES DURING HIS ADOLESCENCE.

TO SOME, THAT WOULD BE A BOON, TO OTHERS A BURDEN.

TO XAVIER, IT HAS BEEN BOTH. HE RECUPERATES NOW FROM A MURDER ATTEMPT ON HIS LIFE. AN ATTEMPT TO SHATTER HIS DREAM.

THE MAN BEHIND THE THWARTED ASSASSINATION WAS NAMED STRYFE. A MEGALOMANIACAL MUTANT.

HE IS DEAD NOW, CONSUMED BY HIS OWN MANIPULATIONS OF TIME AND ORDER.

BUT HE LEFT A LEGACY BEHIND, OF SORTS. A COLLECTION OF THOUGHTS AND DEEDS, ANALYSIS AND PREDICTIONS.

A COMPUTER DISK FOUND BY THE X-MAN, BISHOP, IN STRYFE'S BASE ON THE MOON AND TURNED OVER TO XAVIER, UNSEEN AND UNHEARD.

DISKETTE IN
HARD-DRIVE
CONVERTING
TO DOS .233

UNTIL
NOW...



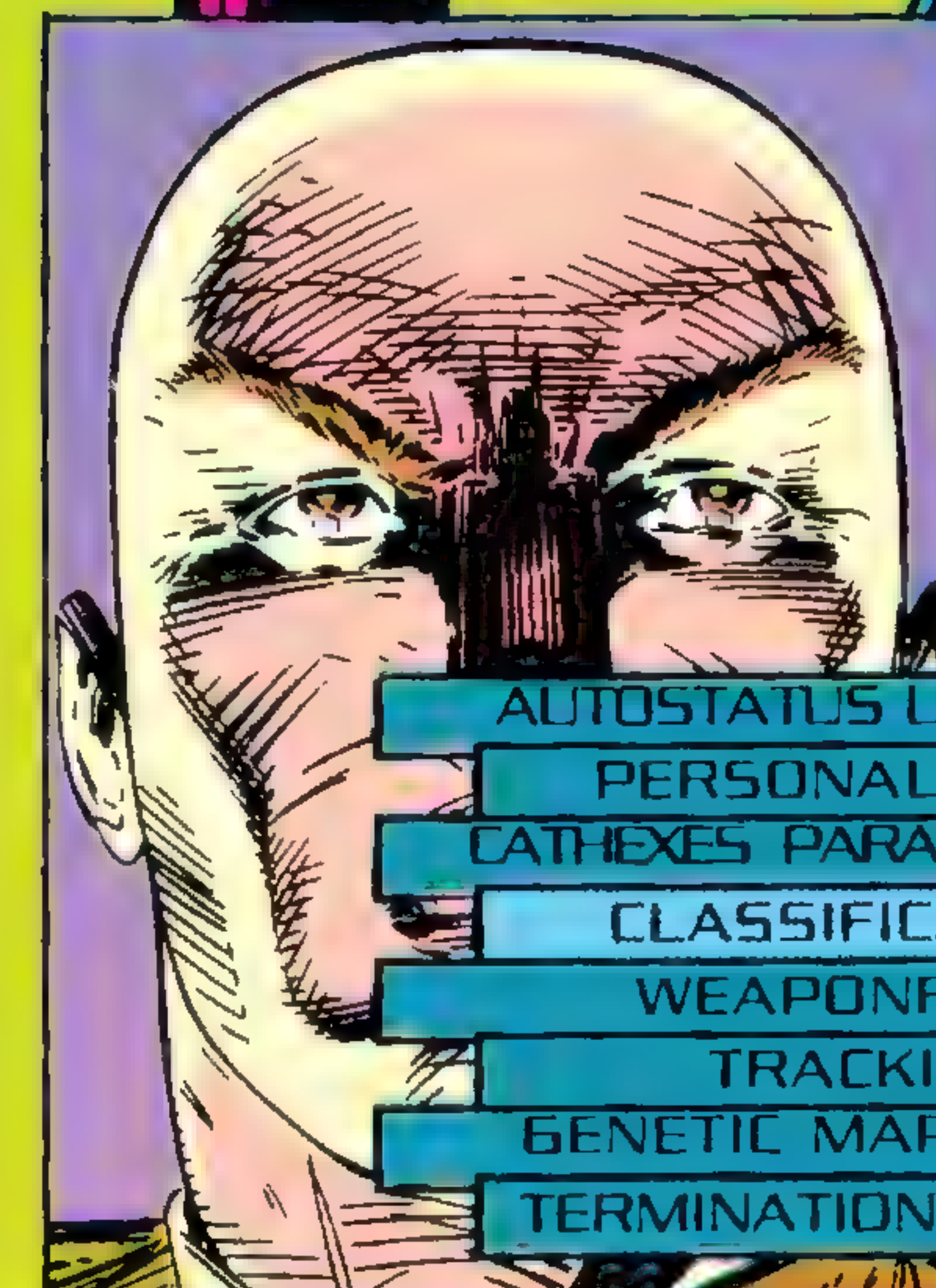
XAVIER What will it be then, Charles? Are you to be the caring grandfather, rocking your charges with gentility and ease? The soft-minded senile proponent of "Happily ever after" — of a future where man and mutant live together in harmony and peace? Or are you the caretaker of a time bomb — the clumsy handler of a walking nuclear arsenal?

Which is it going to be, preacher of the open hand? Can you decide what you are going to be?

I can.

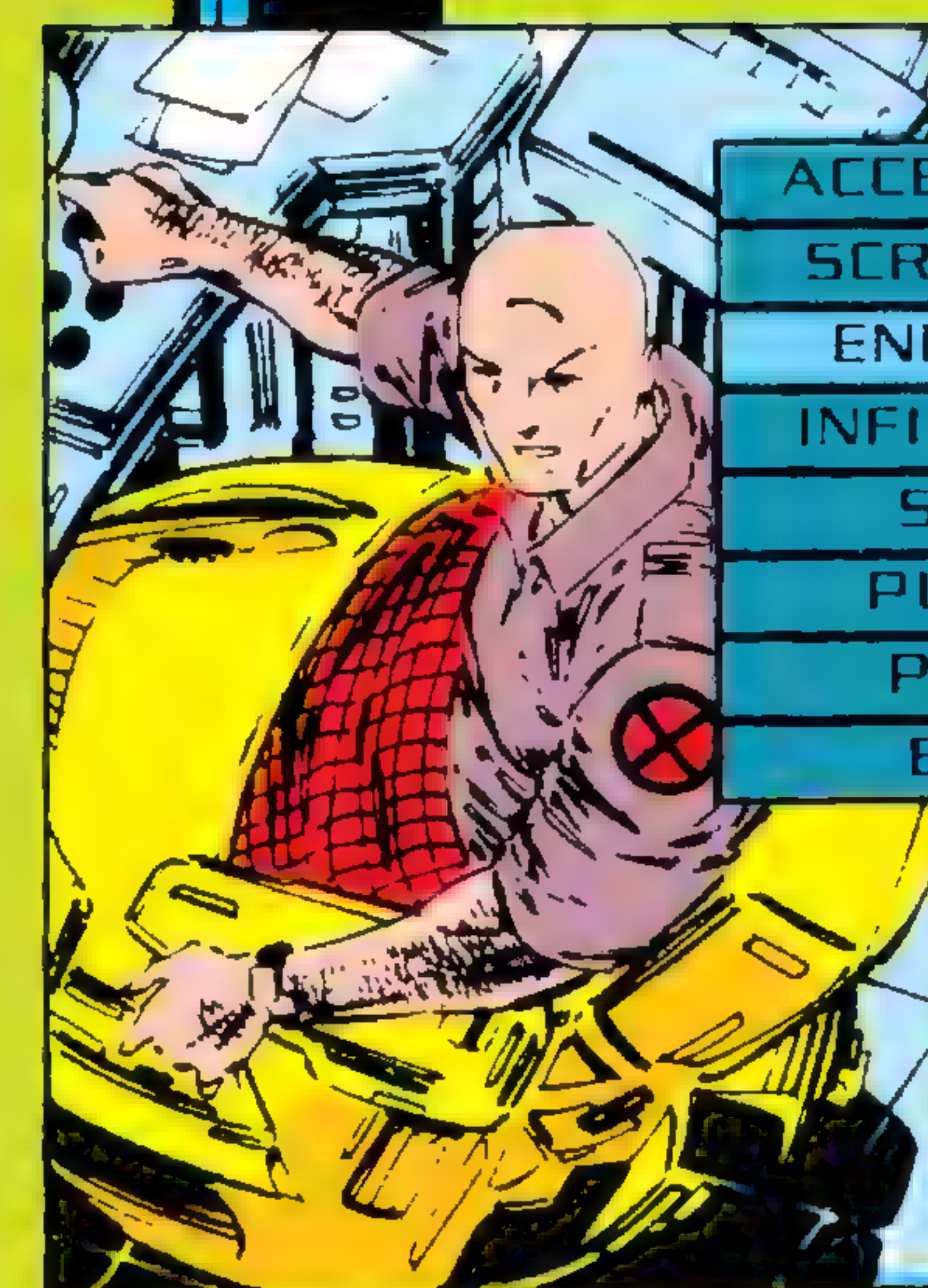
I am the trigger, Charles. The hatred which links your dream to my nightmare is the fuse. And with your death, the match has been struck.

Now let the ensuing explosion rock both heaven and hell. . . both yesterday and tomorrow. . .



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MAGNETO Father of the justifiable means. Teacher of the slapping caress. A man who understood the necessity to preach peace and love, but fight for what he believed in.

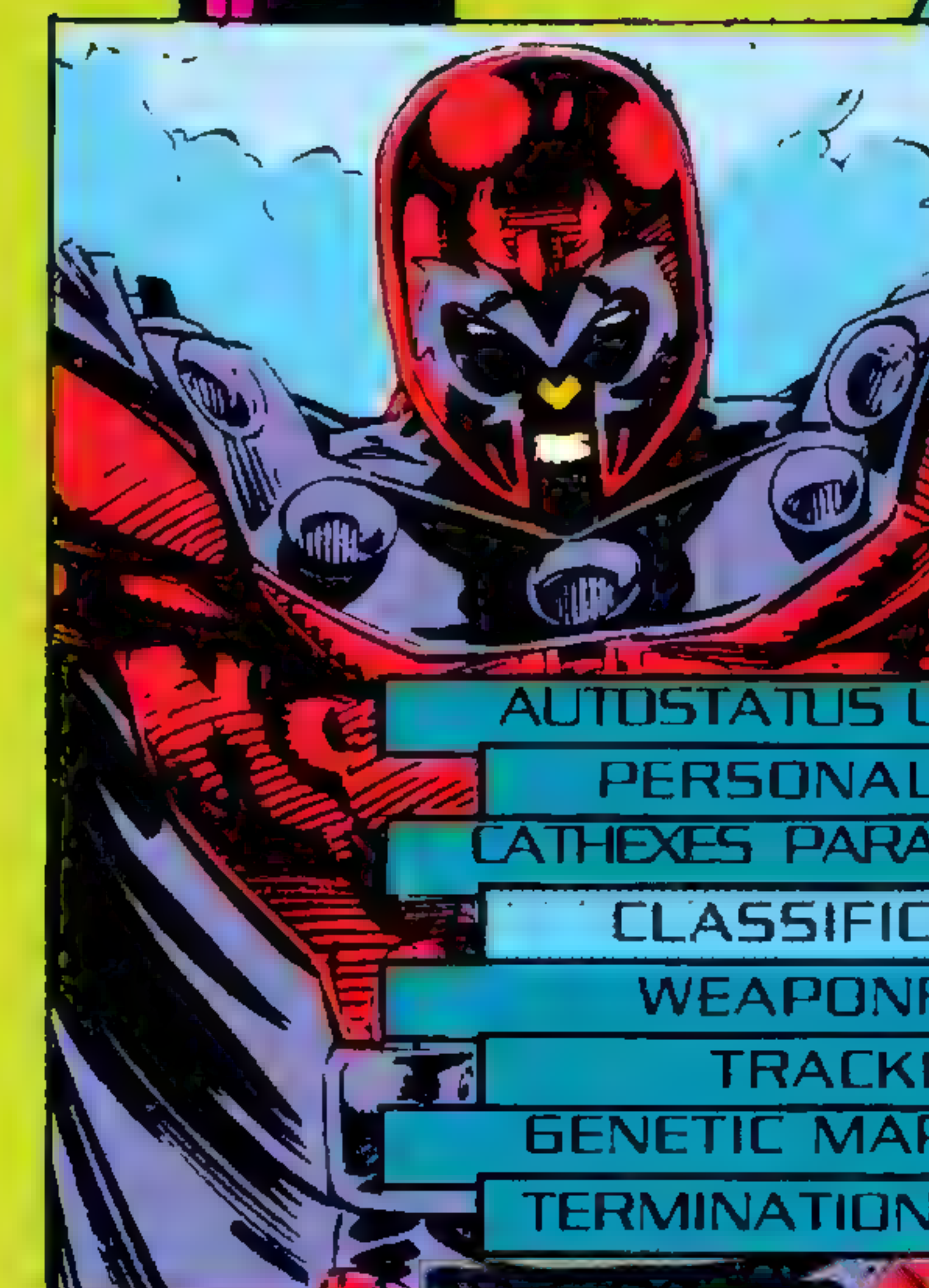
Inevitably, Magnus died as he lived, alone, confused, betrayed. The Master of Magnetism was always a man who believed so strongly in his ideals, that he could not find the means to compromise himself for the sake of a chance at tomorrow.

Forever Lancelot to Xavier's King Arthur, forever the tortured soul who desired tranquility but espoused brutality, Magneto has always been as flawed in his viewpoints, his judgments and his methods, as he claimed his mirror-brother was.

Neither of them learned, in their hard, lonely lives, that *both* their methods, working in unison, side-by-side, were what the mutants of this dismal mudball needed.

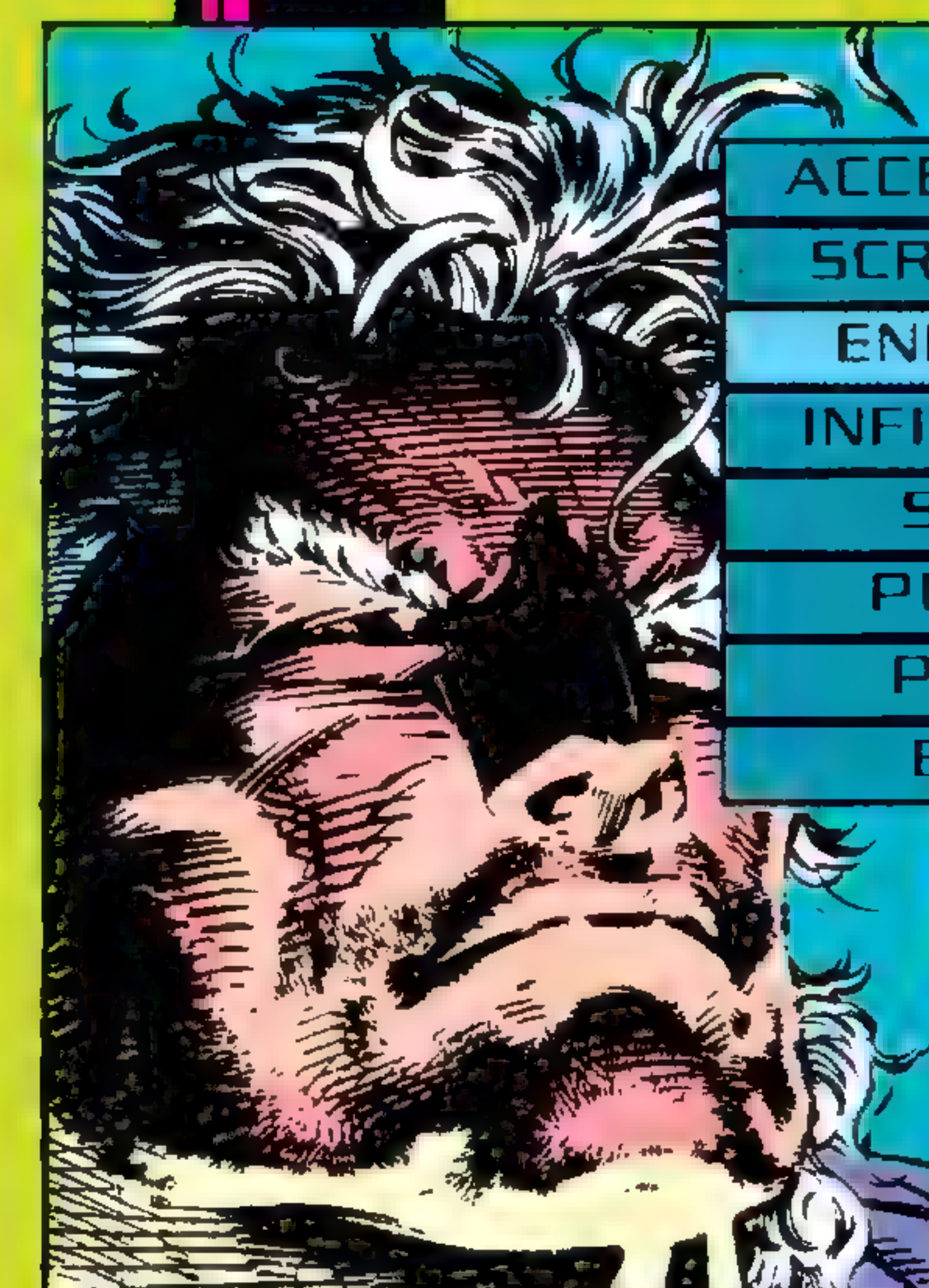
More the fools them, more the pity us.

If both men had learned to accept what was necessary in the other, perhaps the people of *my* time would not have had to endure the kind of cruel existence life has slapped them with. Perhaps the world could have been the kind of harmonious utopia both men envisioned.



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THE ACOLYTES If it is true, that religion is the opium of the *masses*, how much more potent an effect does it have on a mere *handful* of individuals?

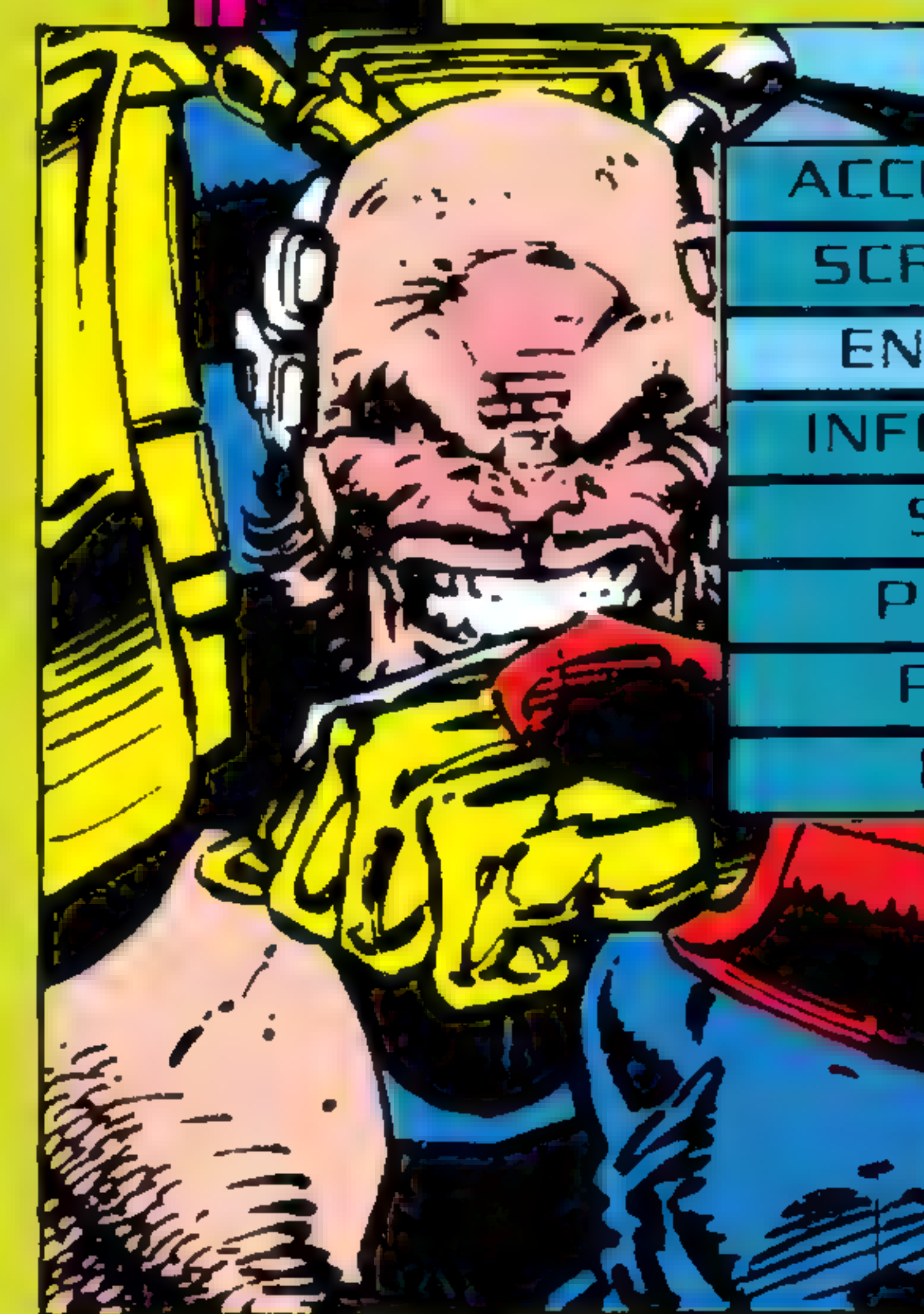
Collectively, they are known as the Acolytes — a fanatical sect of mutant zealots dedicated in thought and deed to the memory of the genetic warlord, Magneto. Like many a believer, however, they chose to concentrate on their reluctant Messiah's more unenlightened times — when he fervently believed there was no way for man and mutant to share the Earth in peaceful coexistence. With Magneto recently elevated to the role of martyr, his congregation is now firmly in the grip of Fabian Cortez — the closet Upstart with his own agenda.

It will be interesting to see what the voluntary induction of an X-Man among their number will have on the rest of the Acolytes — though in all fairness, the inevitable resurrection of their savior will no doubt be paramount in their thoughts...



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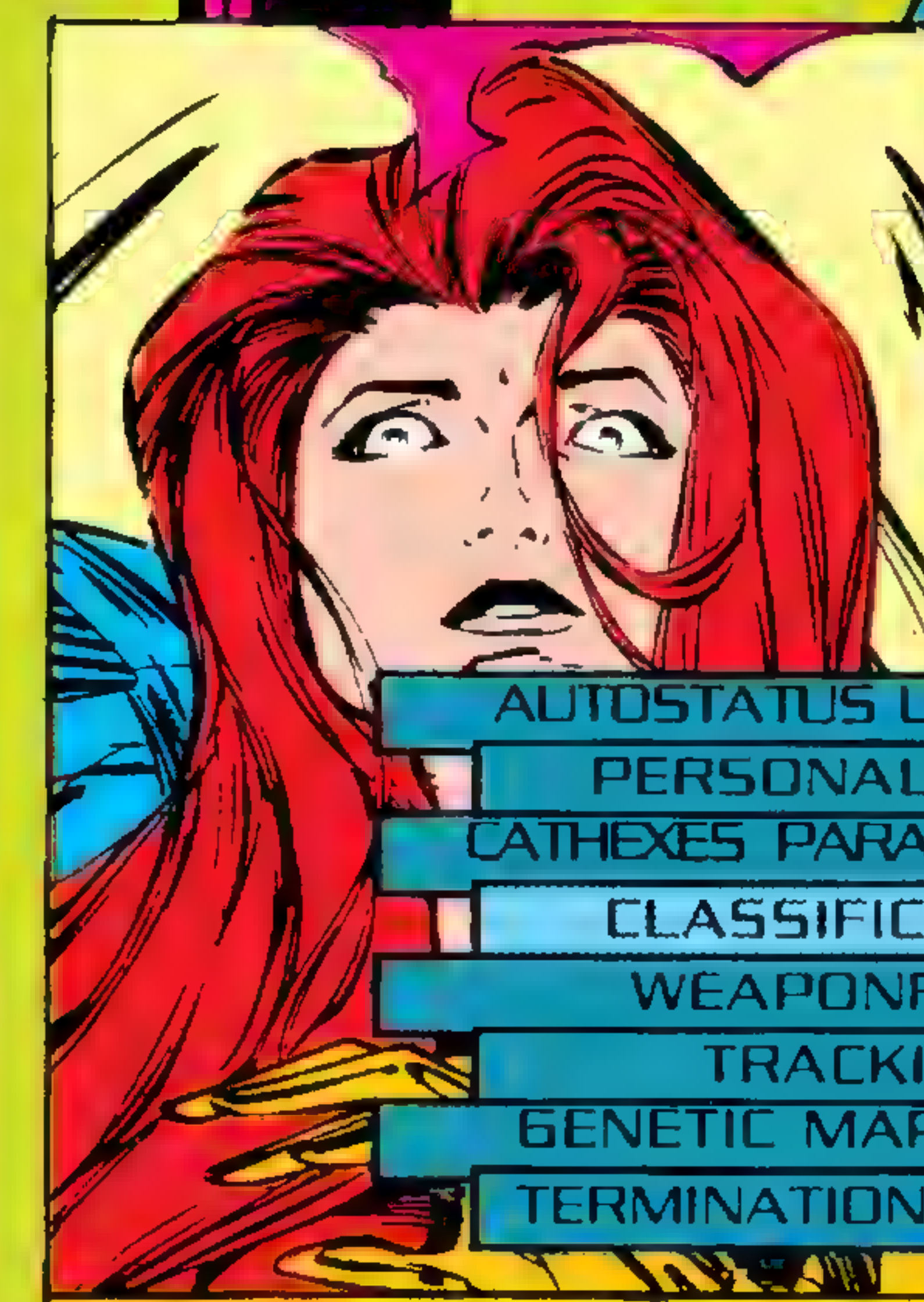


JEAN GREY & CYCLOPS If my plans continue apace, I will have had the opportunity to face you, to speak with you — to wipe a tear from your eye. All the things you never had the opportunity to do.

I hate you both for that — for denying me that which you owed me! That which every generation owes the next — a chance to love — to learn — to grow — from the wisdom of its fore-runners.

But I learned a completely different set of lessons without either of you. I learned of bitterness and loneliness — anger and agony. I learned of love . . . and hate. “Mother and Father” of the mutant destiny — tonight, the child of tomorrow’s hate will destroy you both!

And I will make you both proud. . . because I’ve learned my lessons well . . . and you will see that no one hates you both more than I. . .



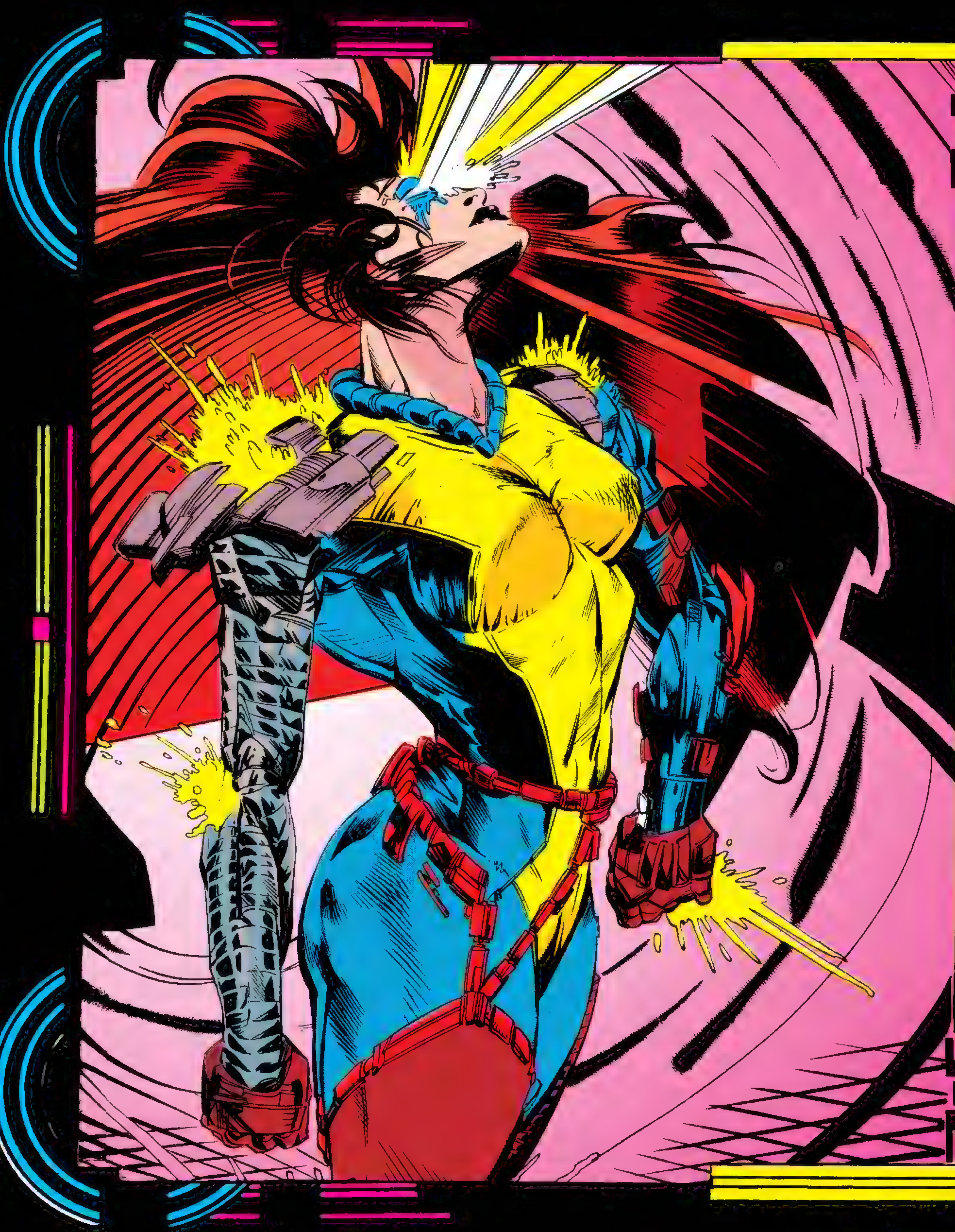
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ASKANI Daughter to the pain and torture of the Tomorrow Killer. Mother and succor to the Dayspring, son of the Morning Fire.

So little have I learned about you, Askani. To me, you were nothing more than a cause for minor distraction. A Clan leader of some distinction, certainly with a stoked fire in your belly, but barely worth my attentions.

Had I known then, what I know now about your actions, I believe I would have taken the time to get to know you better, to wring your neck in my clenched hands. In many ways, Askani, you are the reason I am even alive, and the reason I am really dead.

So do I love you or hate you? Do I nurse at your breast or do I tear at your throat? Do I look for you, if I survive the final chorus of my mad song? Upon finding you, do I gaze into your eyes and slay you cold, leave you for dead, or do I ask for the answers to the questions which have torn at me since birth?

Who am I really? Why am I here? What did I do to deserve this life?

Could you give me these answers, Askani? Would you? I will never be whole until I know.

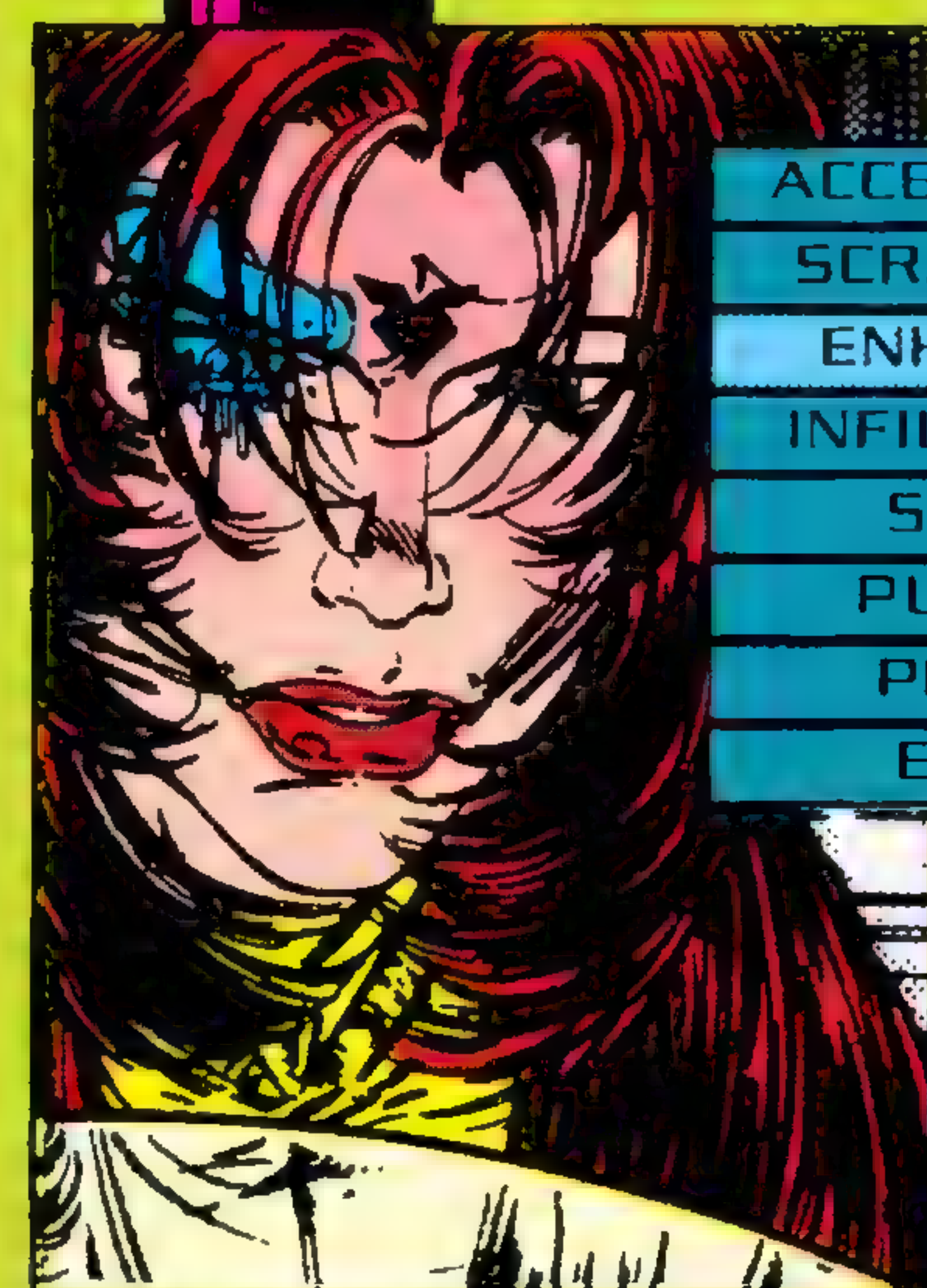
That is where you have left me, my time-worn mid-wife — on the edge, unable to tread upon either side for fear of falling off the precipice, yet ravaged inside for lack of knowing which way to go.

Thank you, Askani. May you one day pay for what you have done in the name of Xavier's Dream. May you burn for providing that hope to others, while forever denying it to me. . .



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POLARIS & HAVOK

Guilt by association. That has always been their clarion call. Never willing to fully participate in the games of the atom, they have nonetheless been dragged kicking and screaming, into the nuclear fires time and again.

They are but the second originators of the mutant salvation. They watch the primaries in acknowledged admiration and muted jealousy.

Does Havok hate Cyclops, I wonder?

Let their wills be forged in the stoking flames of Armageddon. Then we will see what brotherhood is made of. . .in more ways than one.



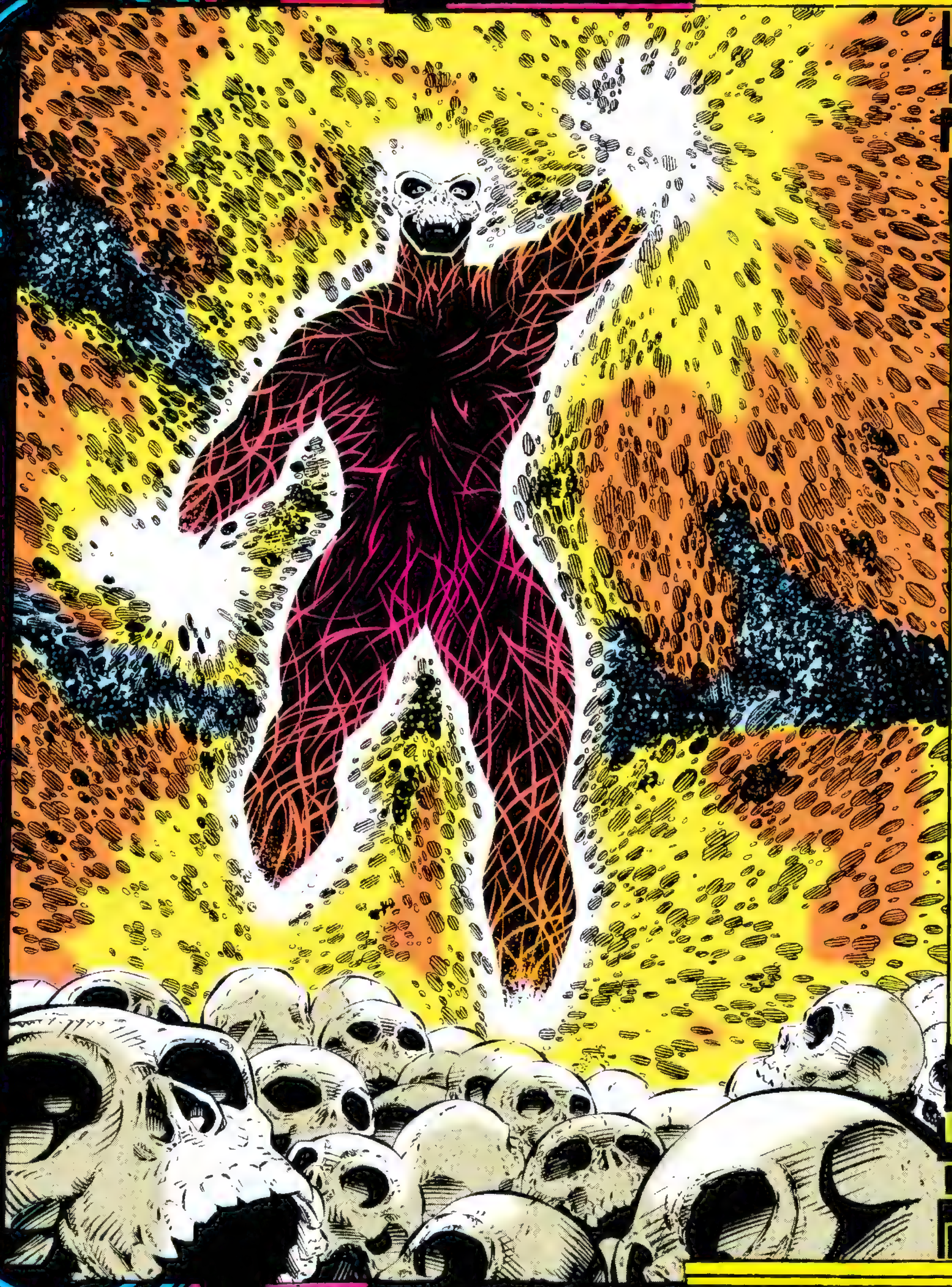
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HOLOCAUST Hero? Villain? Anarchist?

How does one classify a mutant who dares to frustrate the Upstarts at dawn, singlehandedly destroys a Sentinel-processing plant at noon, and attempts to slay the X-Men at dusk? According to history discs of this era, the man should not even exist.

Holocaust is the most frustrating of all the mutants currently under observation, because his methods have yet to reveal his motivation. He does not speak, his thoughts are cloaked even to me, and his mutant powers seem to adapt to any given situation ...and therein, one suspects, lies the means to his defeat.

The name implies his goal is the systematic destruction of all life on the planet Earth—indiscriminate of whether that life be human or mutant.

If that is indeed his intent...he had better hurry, for the legacy awaits.

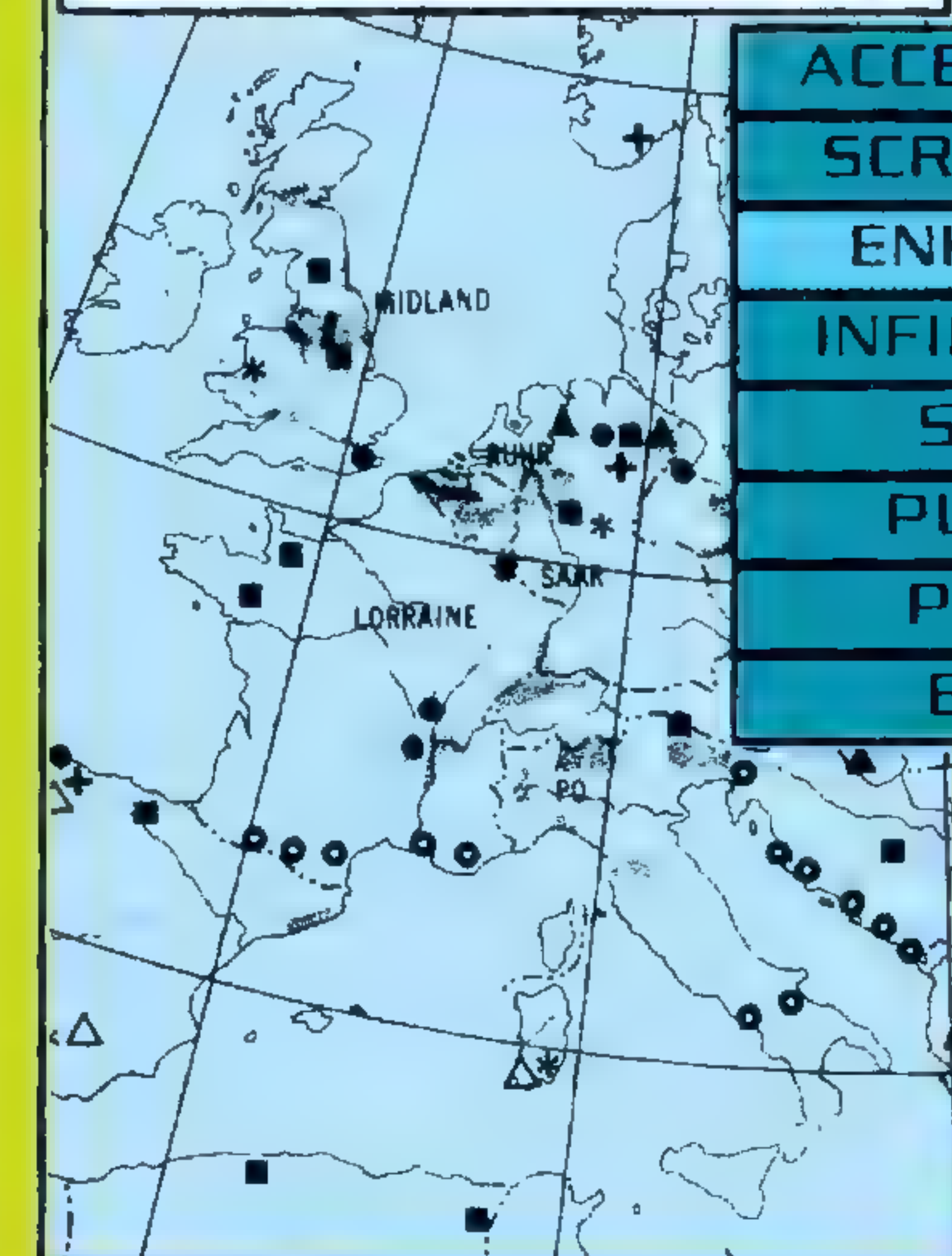


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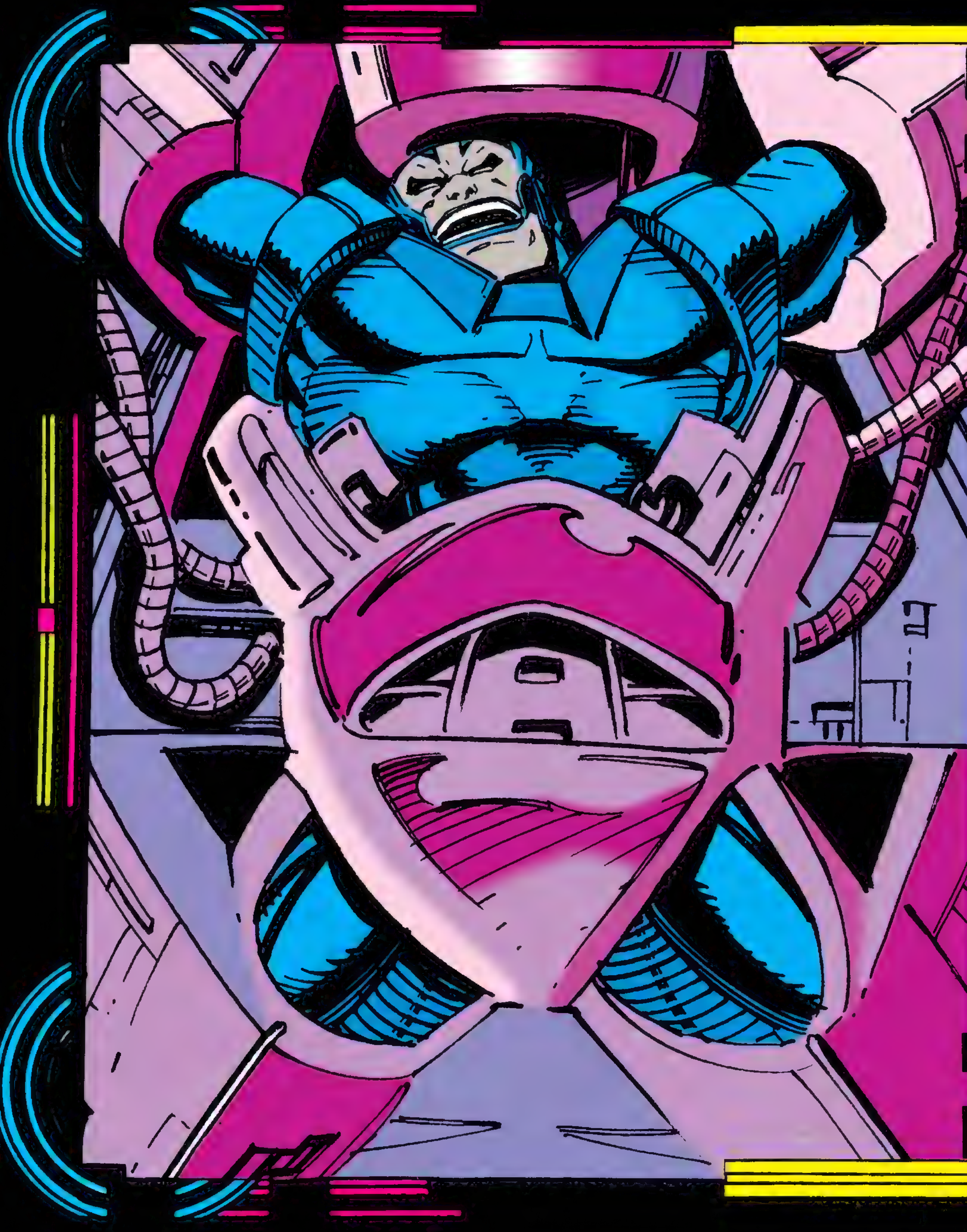


ATTRIBUTED KILL ZONES



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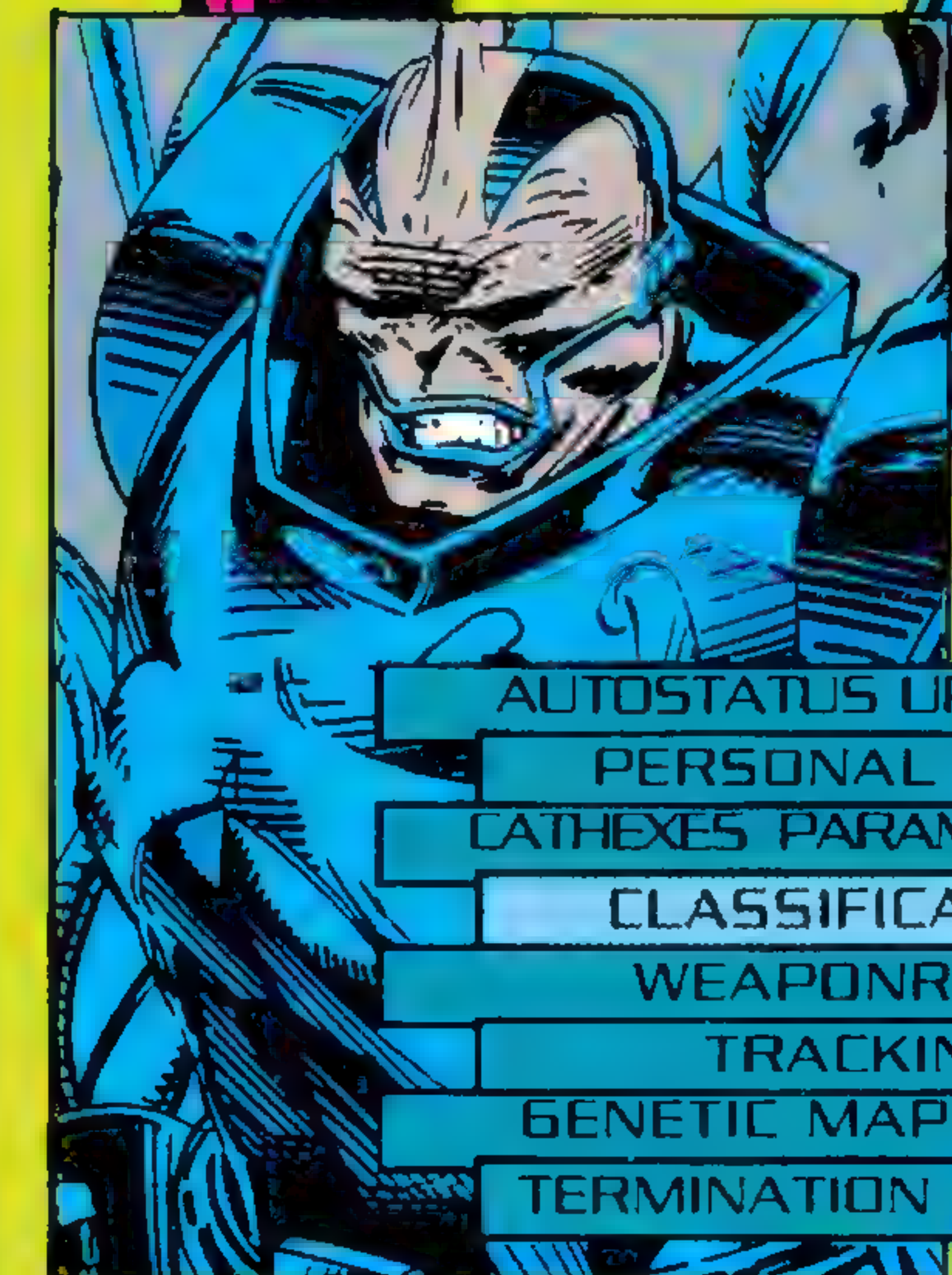


APOCALYPSE It will be a river of blood which spills between us, master of the forever past. And it will be your ancient, congealed, dry-caked ichor which will splatter the landscape like dry heat, washing me down in its dusty tears of time.

When you fall, Apocalypse. . .when your withered hand reaches out for mercy. . .when the master of the forever past asks for help. . .that is when the circle between us will be complete.

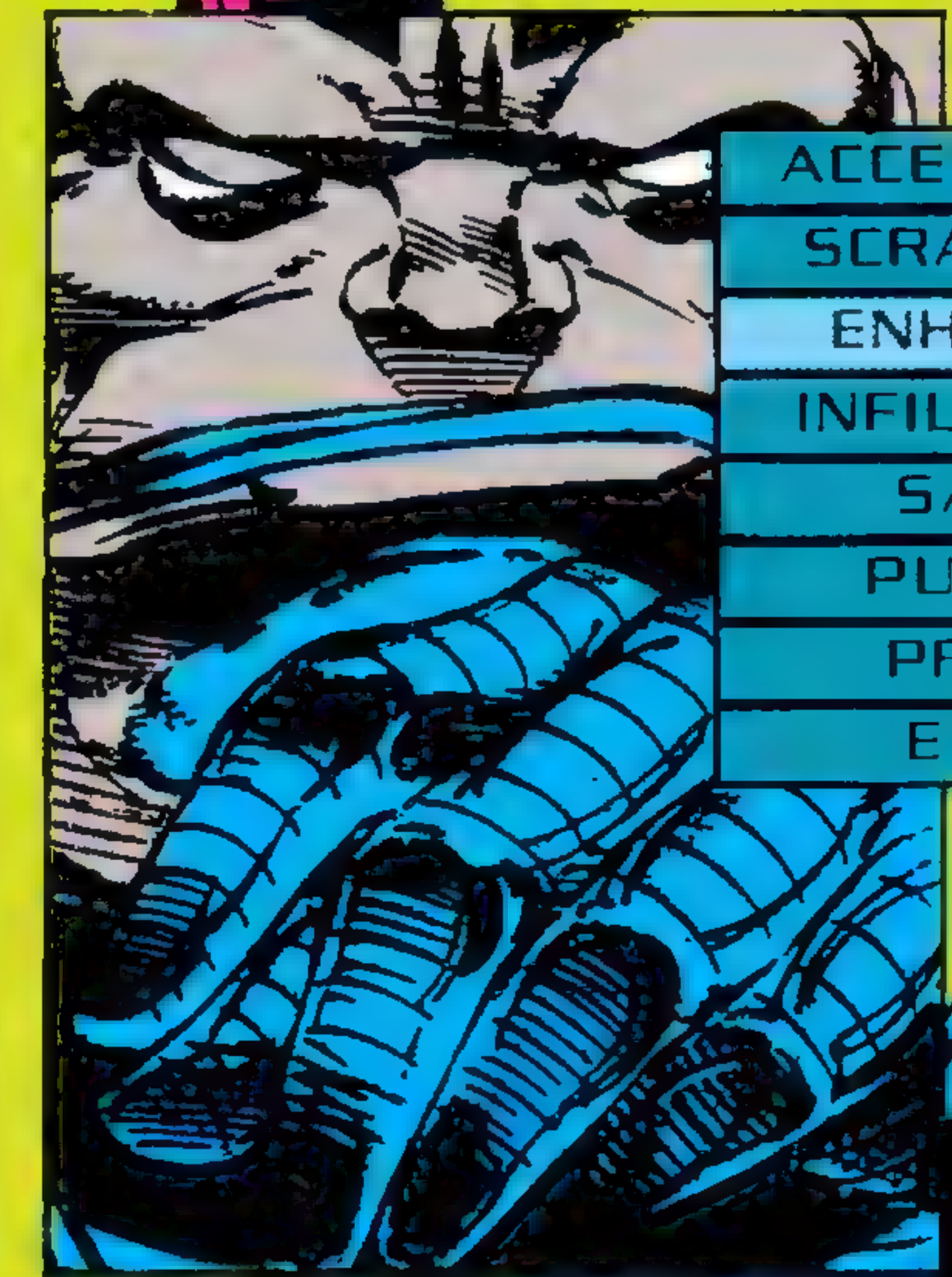
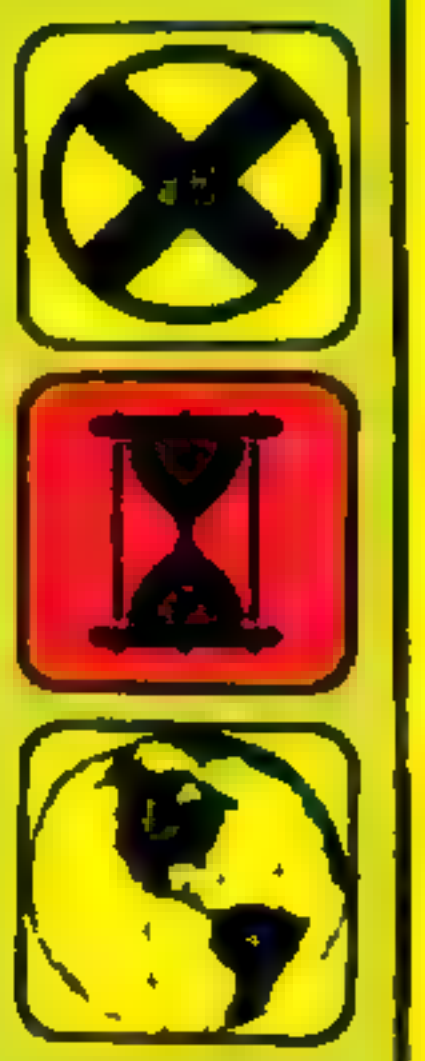
When you will be as helpless before me as I once was before you.

And you will be given in return, what you gave in kind. Nothing but scorn. It is, as you are so fond of always pointing out, survival of the fittest. Let's see which one of us survives.



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DARK RIDERS Play with fire, expect to get burned. Of the many children Apocalypse has littered on the planet like so much flotsam, the Dark Riders were but another attempt to create a group of followers true to their creator's credo: survival of the fittest.

But what if the creator does not qualify for his cherished religion? What do the pupils do then?

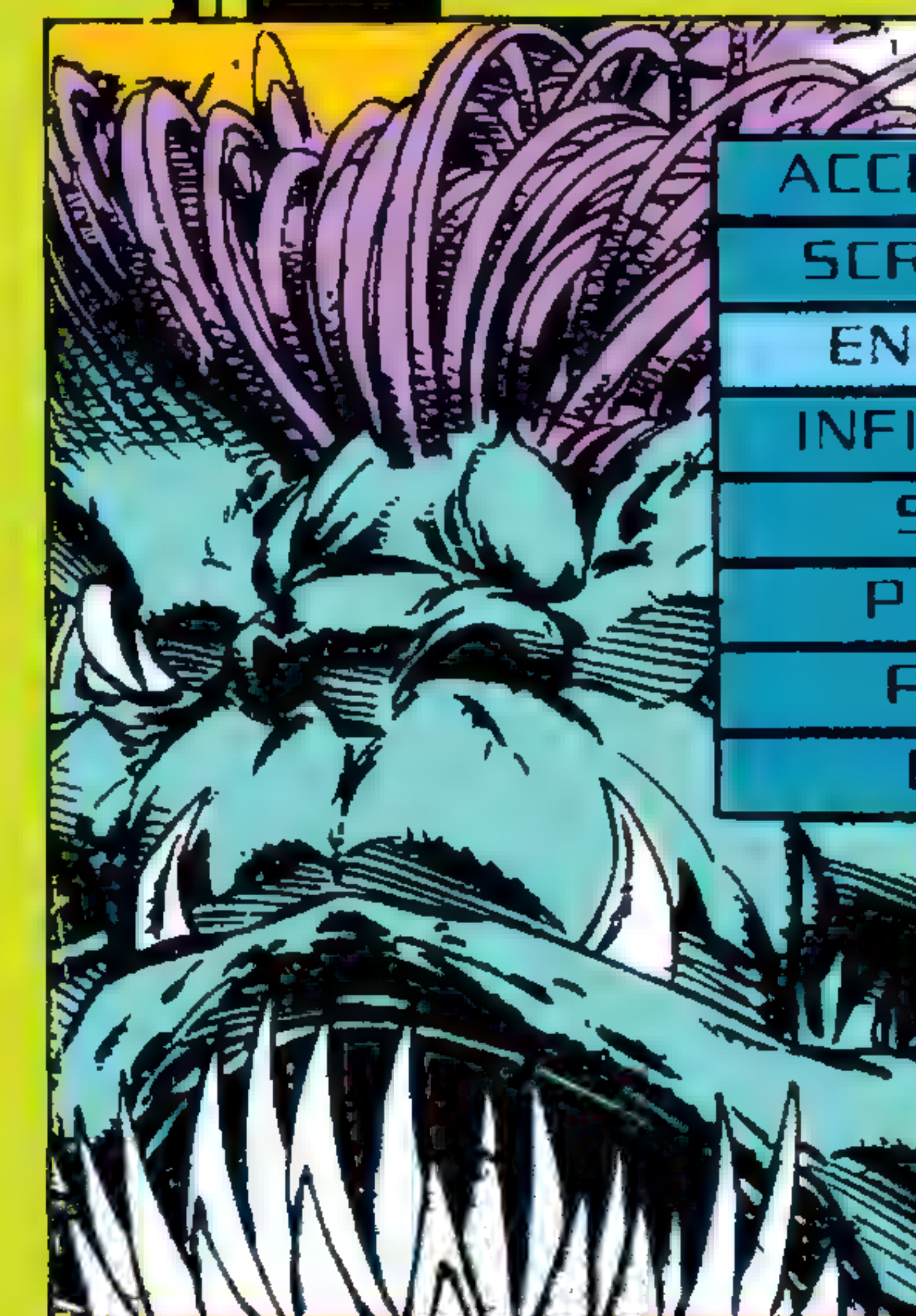
Of all the games I play, this one is the smallest, but the most enjoyable. What do the Dark Riders do when they realize I am more fit than Apocalypse?

They ride the fiery waves of superiority and burn the weak to ash. And with that tidal flow, their master is scattered to the winds of tomorrow's fates.



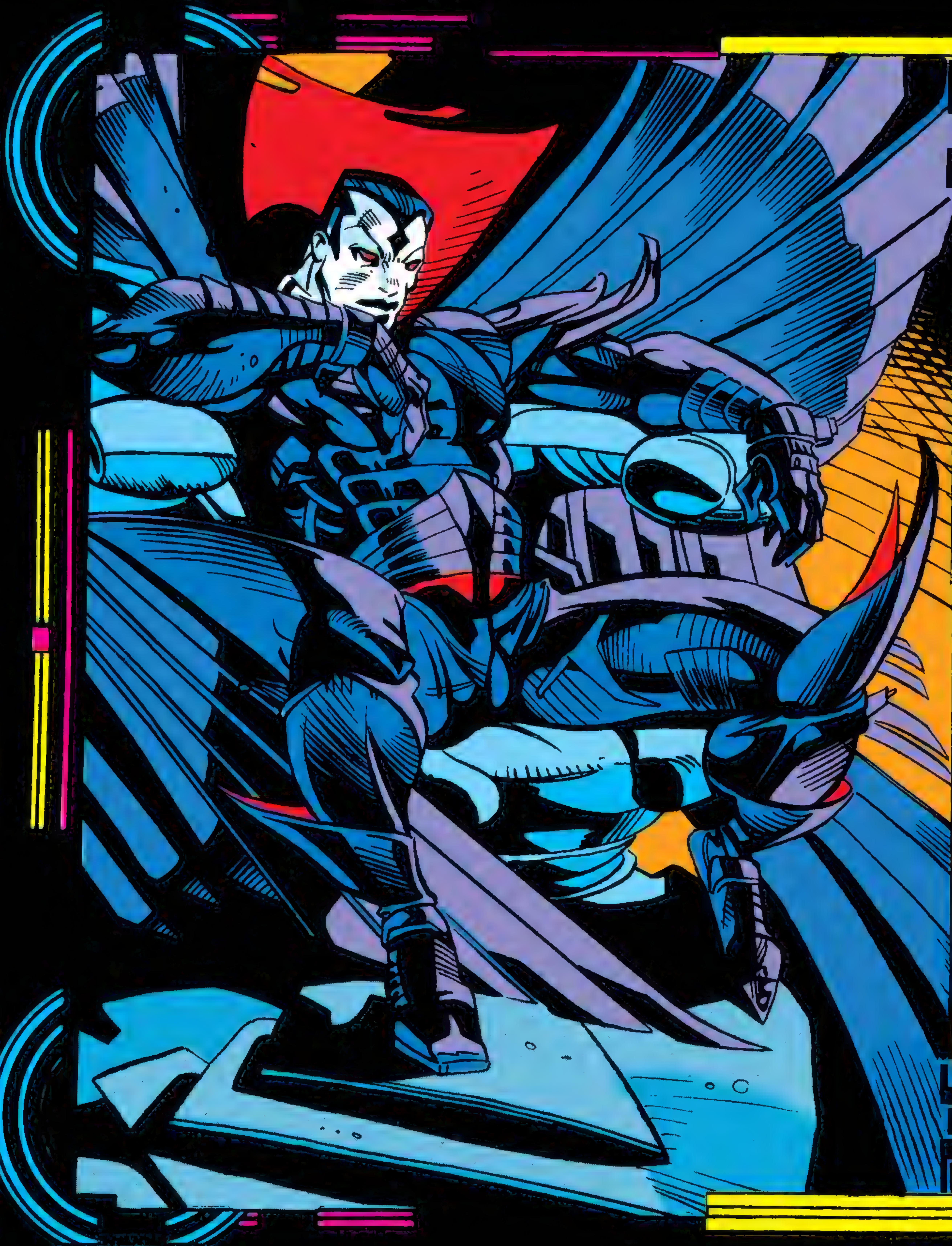
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MR. SINISTER How does one put into words the purity of a lifelong hatred?

How can mere words suffice when live-wire, jagged-carved, open-fleshed nerves ignite sparks of tension at the sight and sound of his name?

Would that I could allow you inside my mind for but the briefest of time. Indeed, you are the architect of my body and soul, the sculptor of my sins.

Sinister, the patron of my masterpiece, I leave with you a pure reflection of that work. I leave you with your heart's greatest desire — I leave you with the foundation of life and death. I leave you with what you left me — a lifetime of guilt, self-hatred, confusion and despair.

Enjoy...



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CALIBAN My blind hound-dog, unleashed into the darkness of his very despair. So desperate to gain the approval of his many masters is my stumbling retriever, that he would naively bite the hands that feed him, as well as those which discipline him.

With the carrot dangling before his jaundiced eyes, what will the hound do?

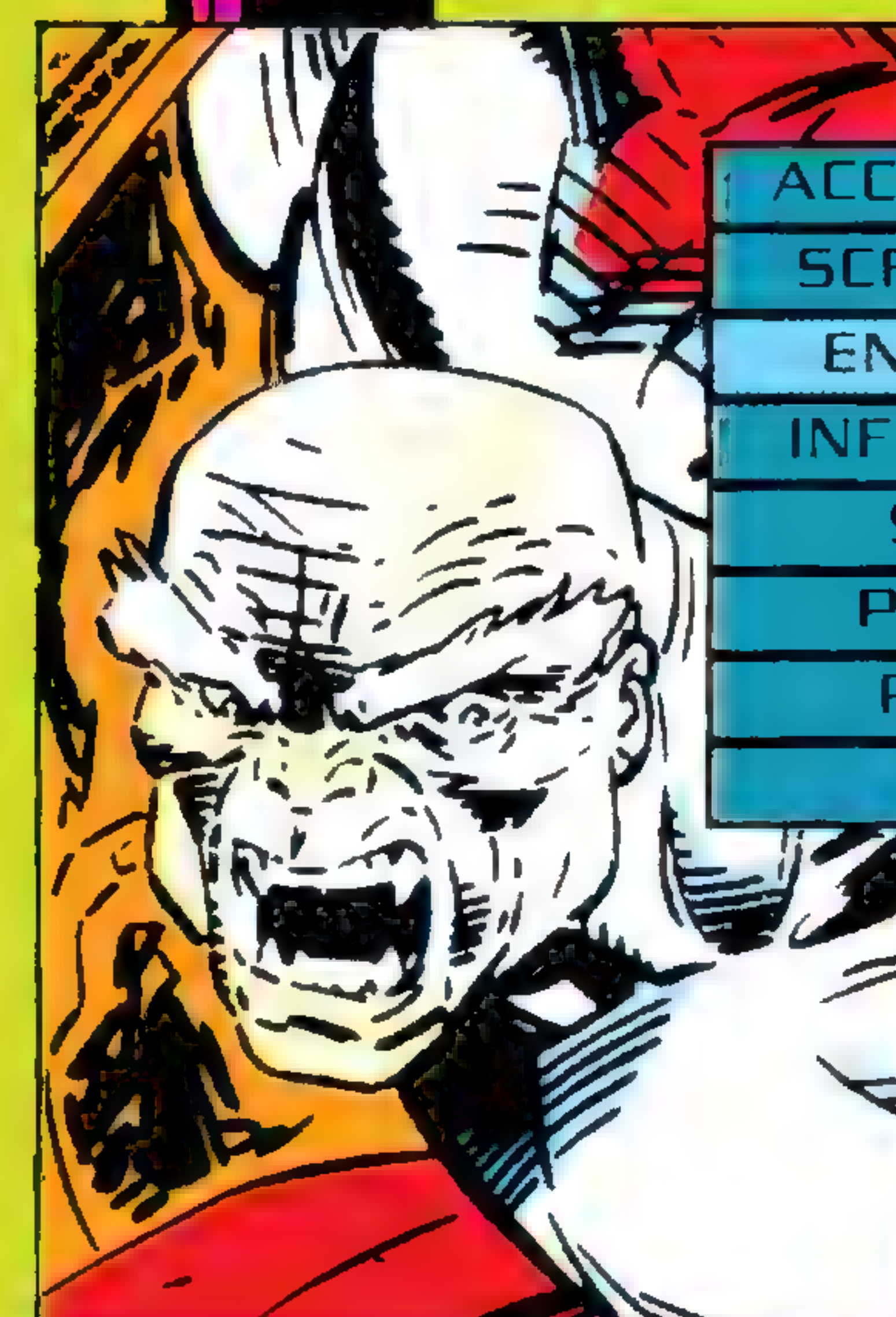
What is to become of this gentle soul, torn asunder by his overwhelming need for acceptance? What is to become of Caliban when he learns he's been coerced into consigning to death's domain two of the few who would have accepted him into their lives without preconditions?

Why, he will despair, wither and die, one could only hope...



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BEAST Play the part of the fool no more, Hank McCoy. Masquerade the fop no longer. It is time to come out of your self-imposed erudite shell of tomfoolery and banality. Let the mind of the beast come out. Let the molecular chess player play a game with me. It is time you found out what the man inside the animal is all about.

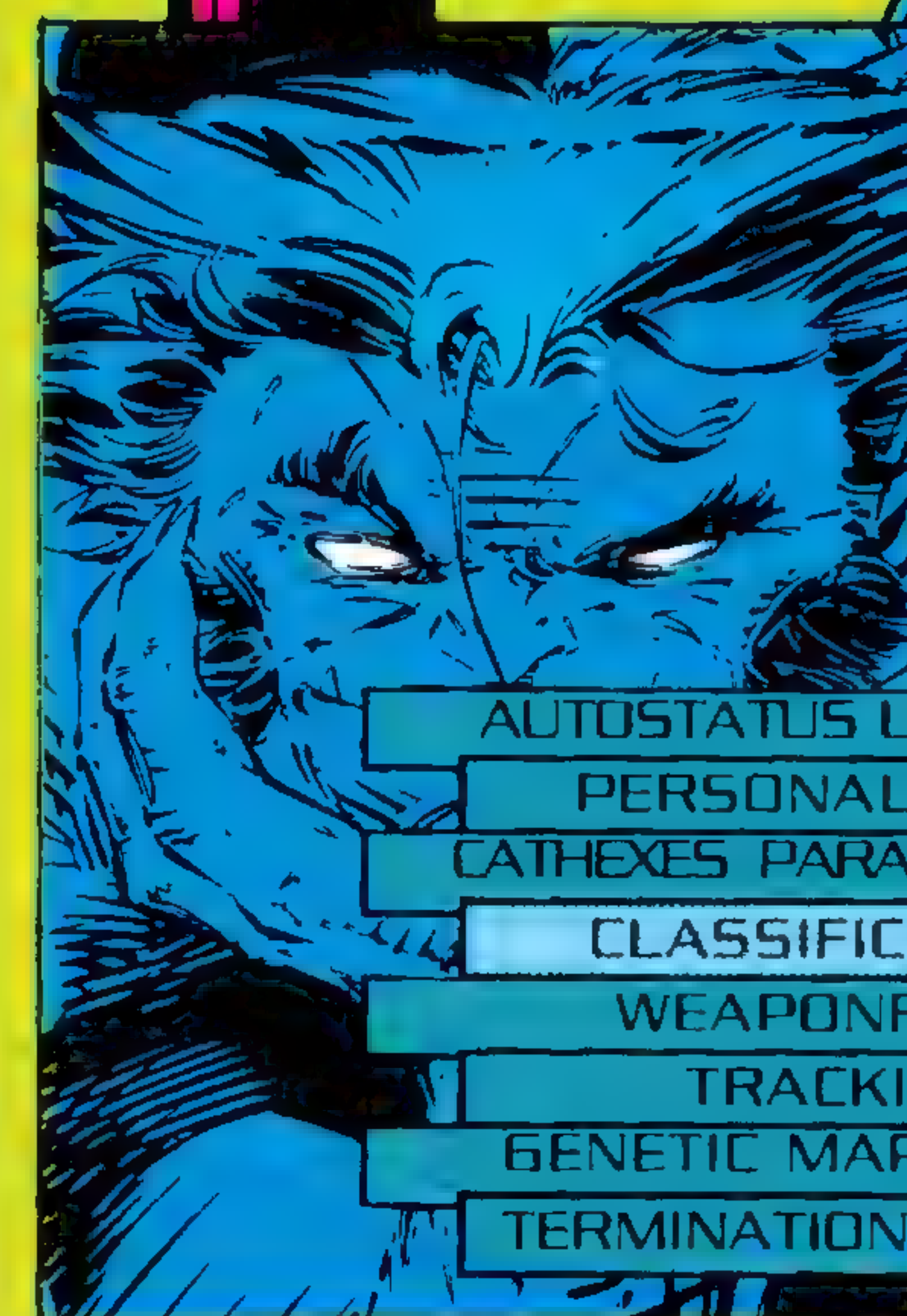
If anything, my legacy, while bringing out the worst in your brothers and sisters, will bring out the best in you. Put the idiot savant aside. Stop pretending to be the circus clown one moment, the over-loquacious intellectual the next. It is time now to be the man you have always wanted to be.

I leave you no choice, McCoy.

If you do not grow up and assume the responsibility which is now yours, the entire mutant race could be wiped out.

What a burden that would be. Could you continue to laugh while the world cries the way they have laughed as you cried?

Such a twist of fate, that the blanket of security you have erected around yourself must be tossed aside in order to achieve your fullest potential. What will the real Beast show the world?



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ARCHANGEL Which Warren Worthington will come out to play tonight? Upright and moral protector of mutantkind or self-deluded avenging angel of death?

It comes down to a matter of which side of the coin Warren wishes would land face up.

I hold the shiny silver quarter, it catches the devil's light just so. It teases and tantalizes you with the hint of treasures to come. You take it in your cold, hard fingers. I show you where to toss it. Apocalypse is the playing field. You smile.

The coin goes up, twisting and turning in mid air, not unlike a gentle bird caught in a swirling tornado of lust and desperation.

It lands, spinning light playing off your eyes. . .What does it come up, Warren? Which will it be?



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PSYLOCKE/BETSY BRADDOCK

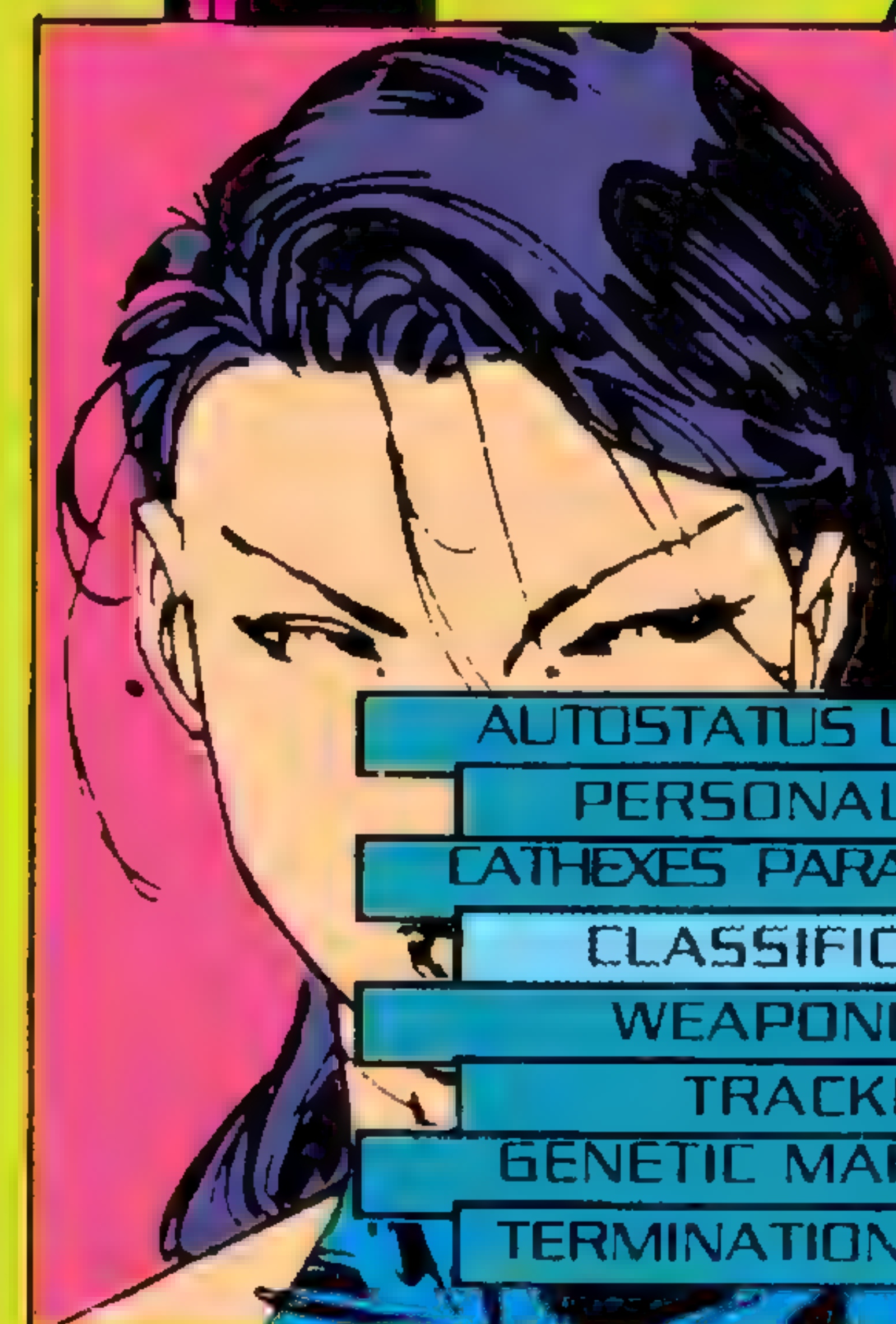
The forthright, uptight, proper British maiden has been turned into a finely-tuned killing machine. The woman whose heritage and upbringing crafted carefully constructed walls of reserve and superiority around her, now finds herself able to approach anyone — physically and mentally — from the inside as well as the out.

What happened to this paragon of English virtue? How did she turn into a fiery dragon of the night? Transformed by the manipulations of others, she now, in turn, manipulates.

But to what purpose? What hides beneath those shadowy eyes? What angers flare? What passions smolder? How does Elisabeth Braddock *really* feel about the changes she has undergone? How could anyone know, when they haven't bothered to ask her? How could she know, when she hasn't seemed to consider the changes too carefully.

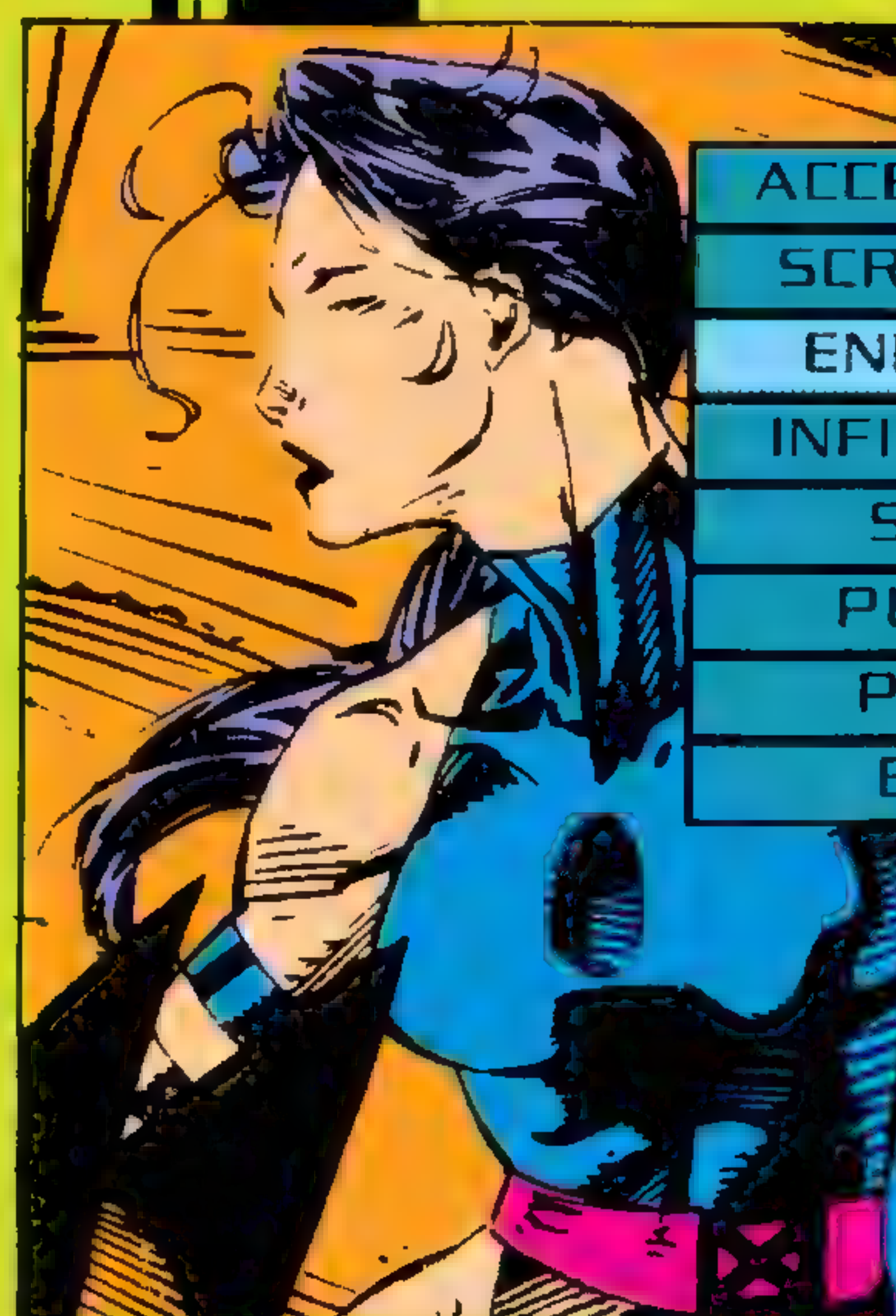
How odd, that an ice telepath, someone so capable and willing to cut to the core of other people's minds, is so unable to probe her own.

Would that these blithely blind children begin to ask questions — of her and of themselves, because if they wait too long, they might not find the answers to their liking. . .



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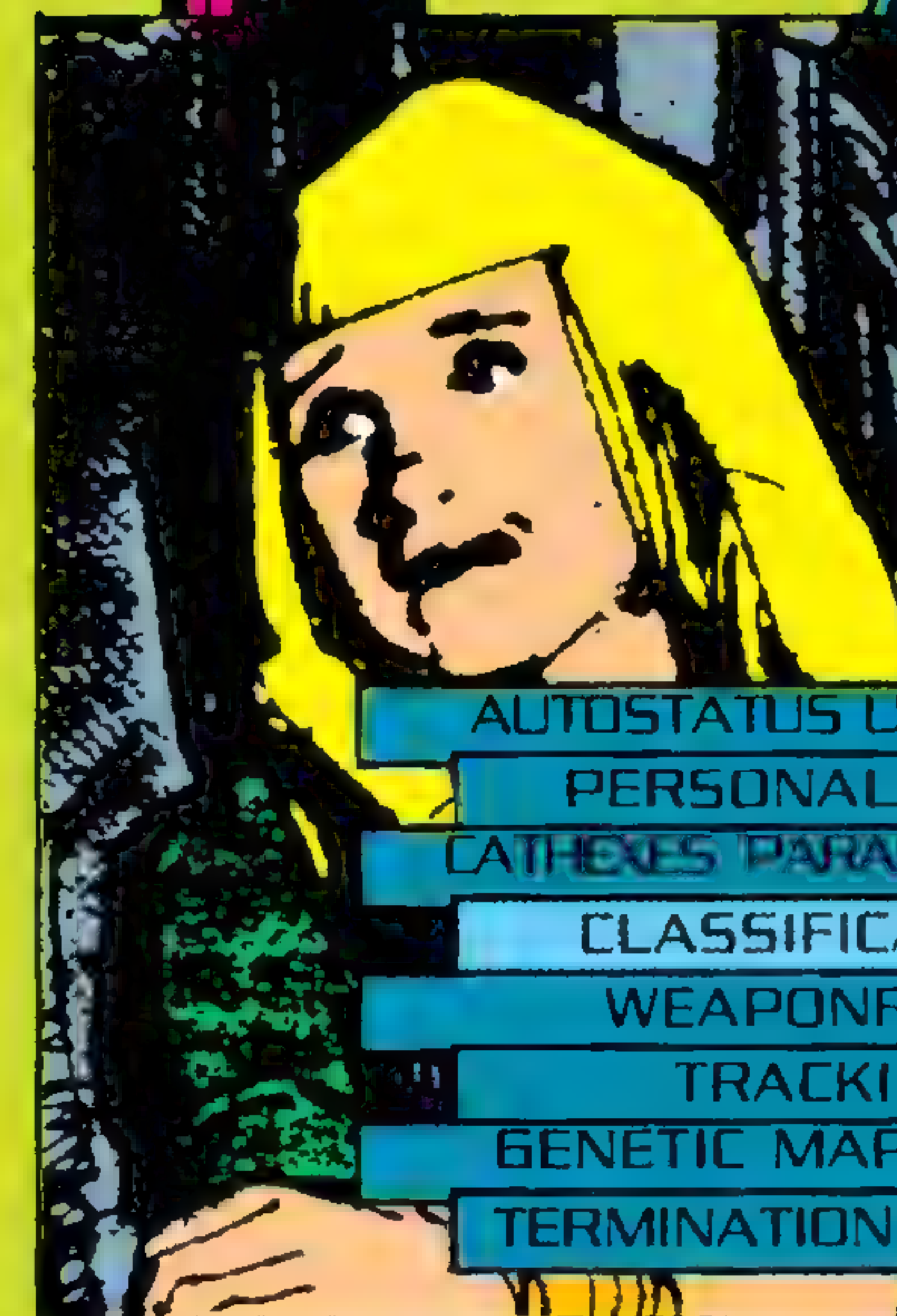
ILLYANA Child of innocence, demon of hate. Smiling girl in a field, frenzied teen in a war zone. A flower in her fingers, a sword in her hand. Illyana Rasputin, Darkchilde Magik. Little girl, mutant sorceress.

What a combination.

A creature who has seen more of time from both sides of the unending path than I ever could hope to. She has lived then and now, here and there. Earth present, past and future. Limbo never-where, forevernow.

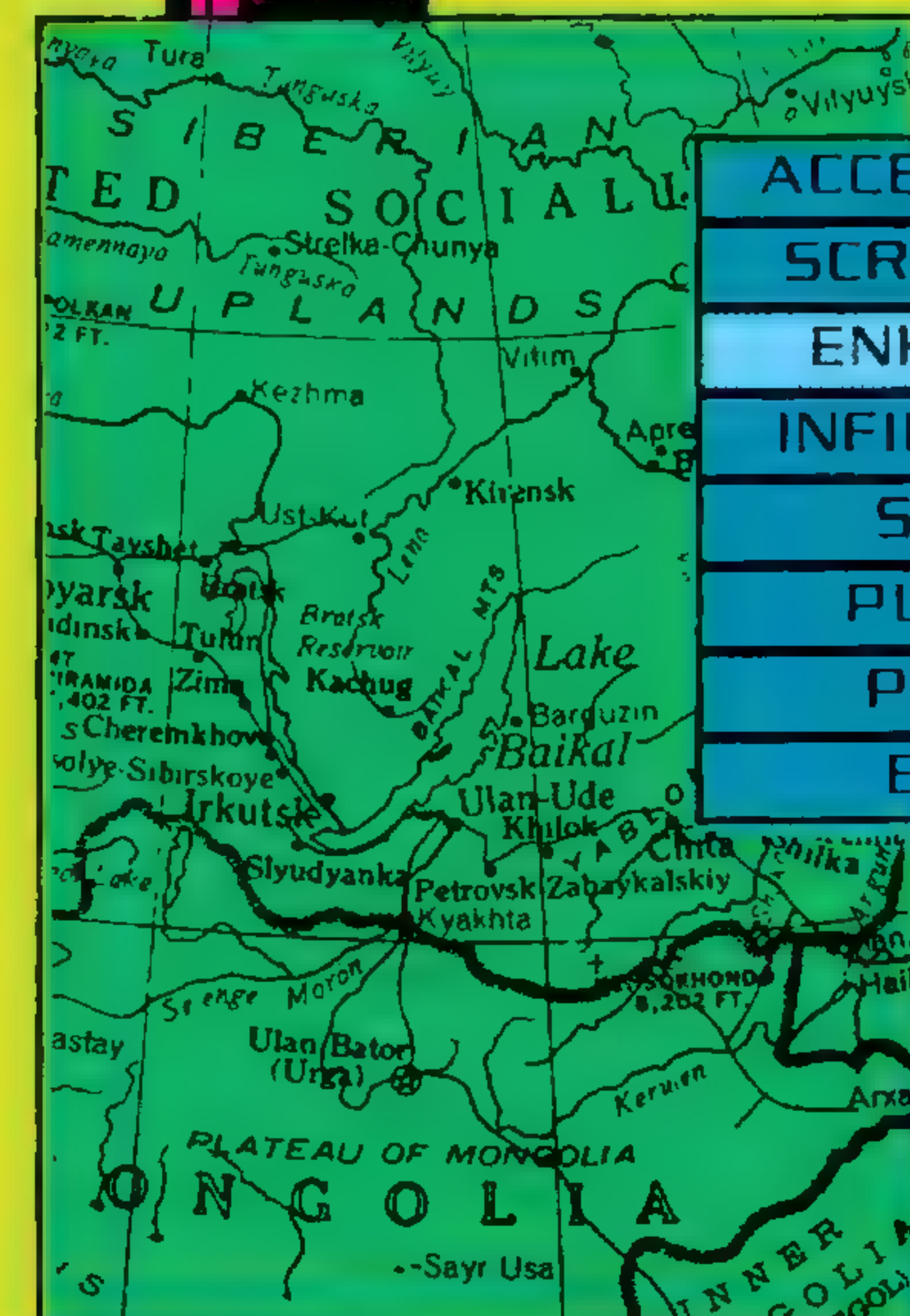
What would her future bring? What would the onset of puberty trigger? Would little Illyana become a teleporting mutant in the care of the children of the atom, or a demoness apprentice in a nether-region even the denizens of Hell fear to mention?

In time, one would find out. But time is something not everyone has much of. No matter the age, no matter the desire. My legacy may strike anyone born of mutant blood. From the oldest of the old...to the youngest of the young...



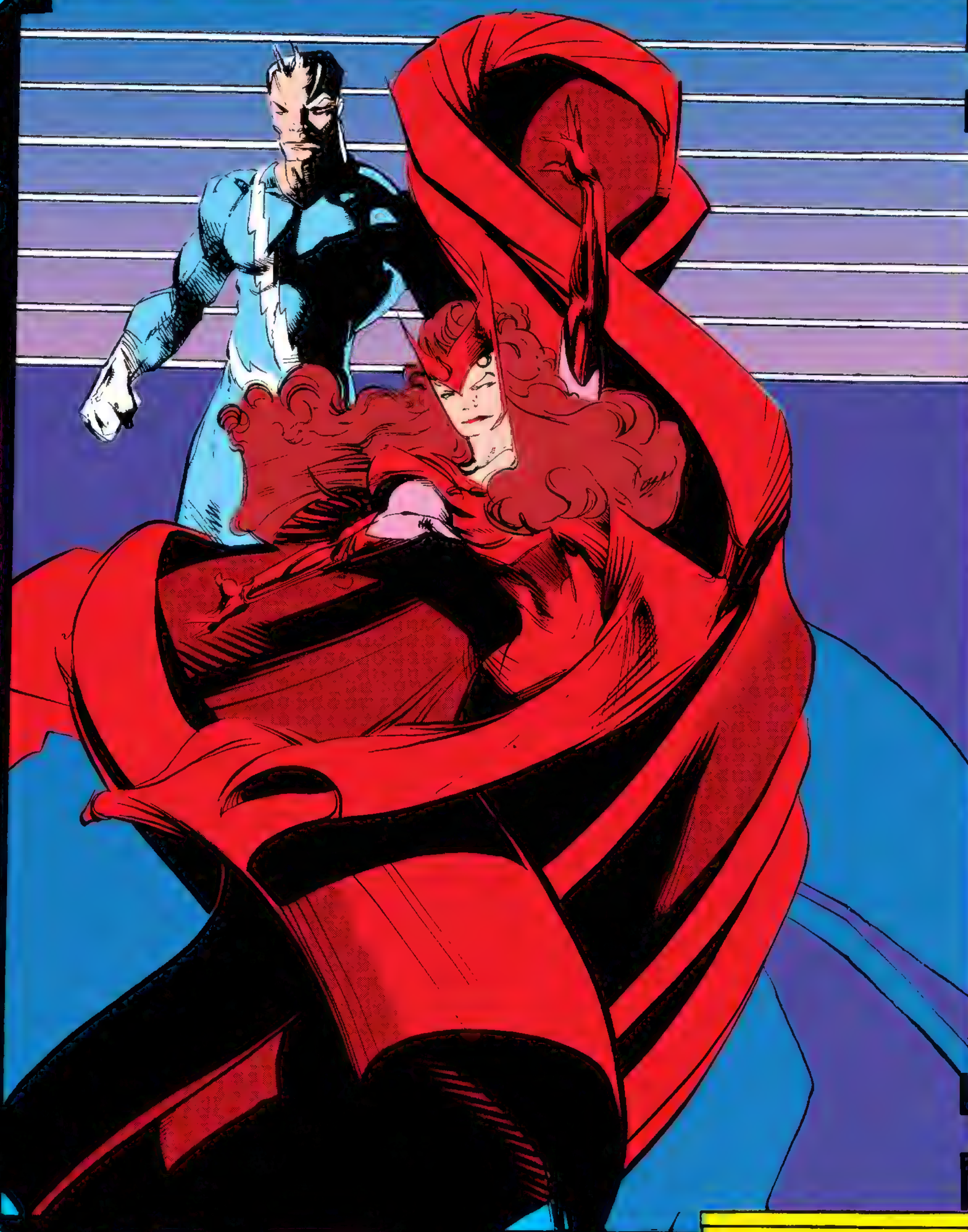
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SCARLET WITCH/QUICKSILVER

The children of the failed King, they are so like their father. Having failed far more often than having succeeded, Wanda and Pietro Maximoff Magnus have seemingly resigned themselves to a life of painful mediocrity.

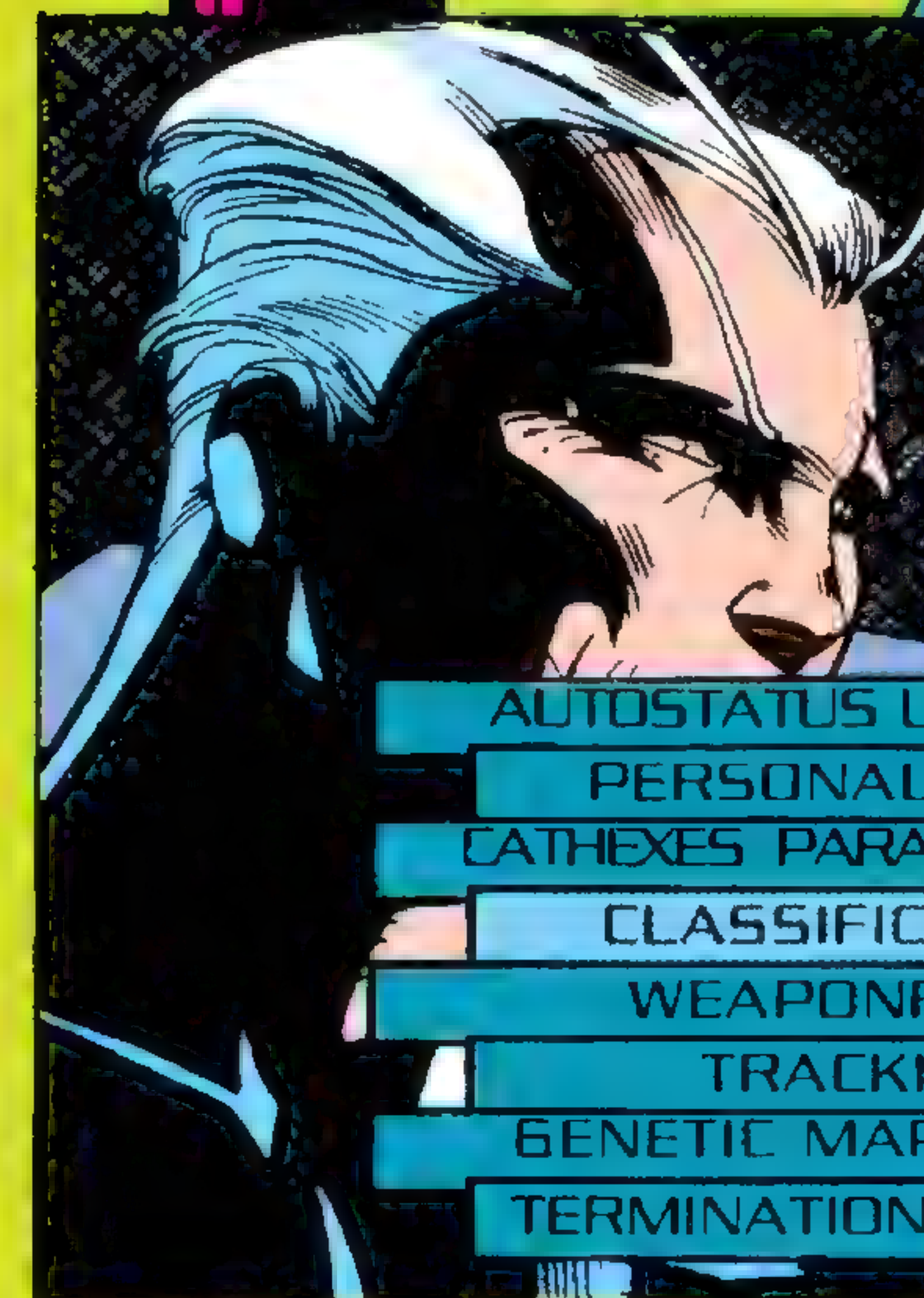
Pietro hides behind a rapier wit and the ability to actually be able to *run away* from his problems like no one else on the planet.

Wanda shields herself behind a veneer of self-control, in defiance of the laws of probability regarding human psychology, if not human physiology.

So where do this brother and sister? What legacy has their father left them? Will they ever be able to assume the mantle of power Magneto would most surely have wanted for them, or will they continue to play the part of the scorned children?

One thing is quite certain, between the two of them, the brother and sister hold within them power enough to rule the world, though they continually refuse to accept this fact.

They individually manipulate chance and motion — what more could they possibly need to ensure that *all* events around them proceed in a fashion suitable to their desires?



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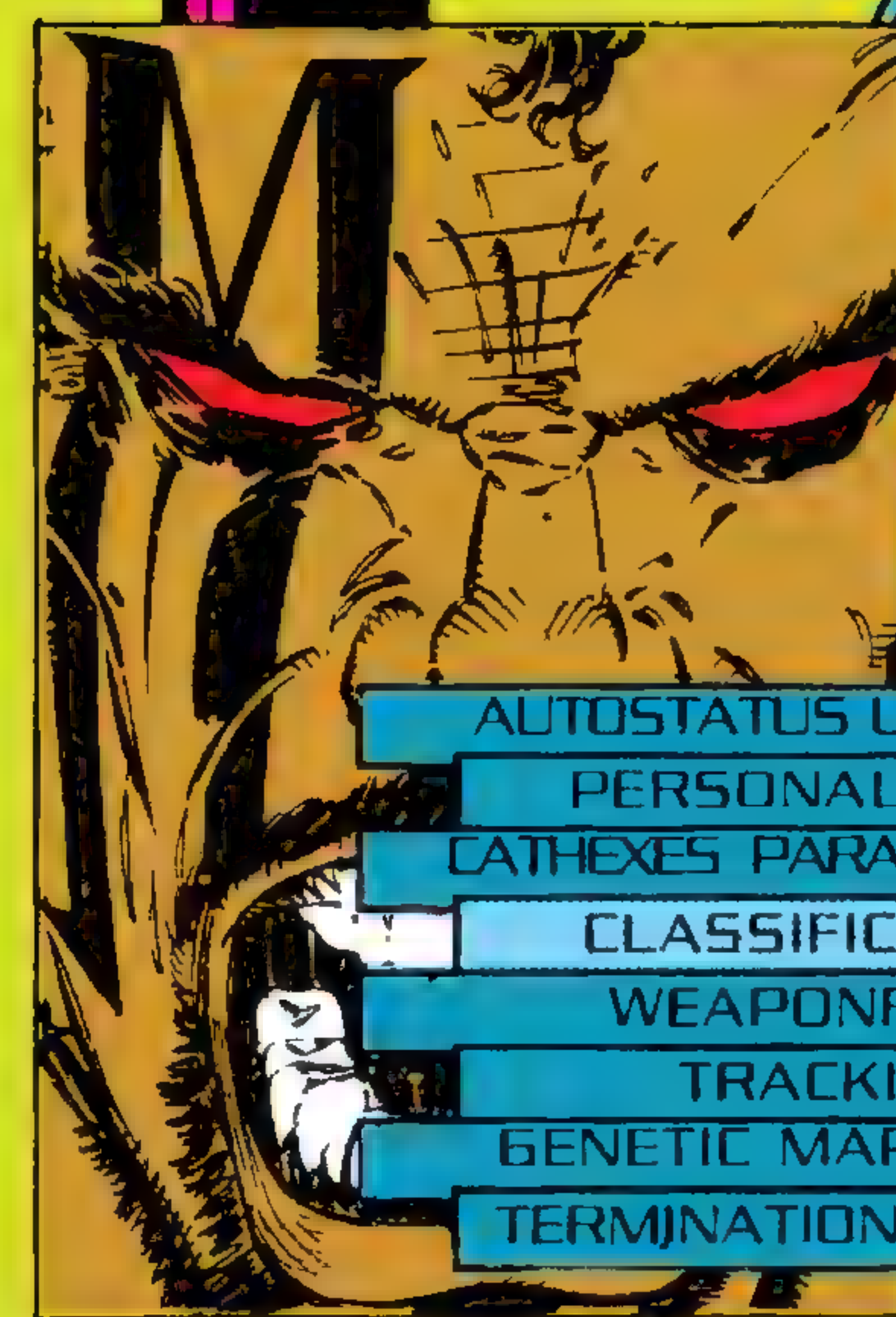


BISHOP & WOLVERINE Hunters, born and bred, in a world too weak for them. They catch the scent of trouble and think they know the intent of the prey.

One born to the pains of the past, the other to those of the future. Two men, as out of time and touch with themselves as am I.

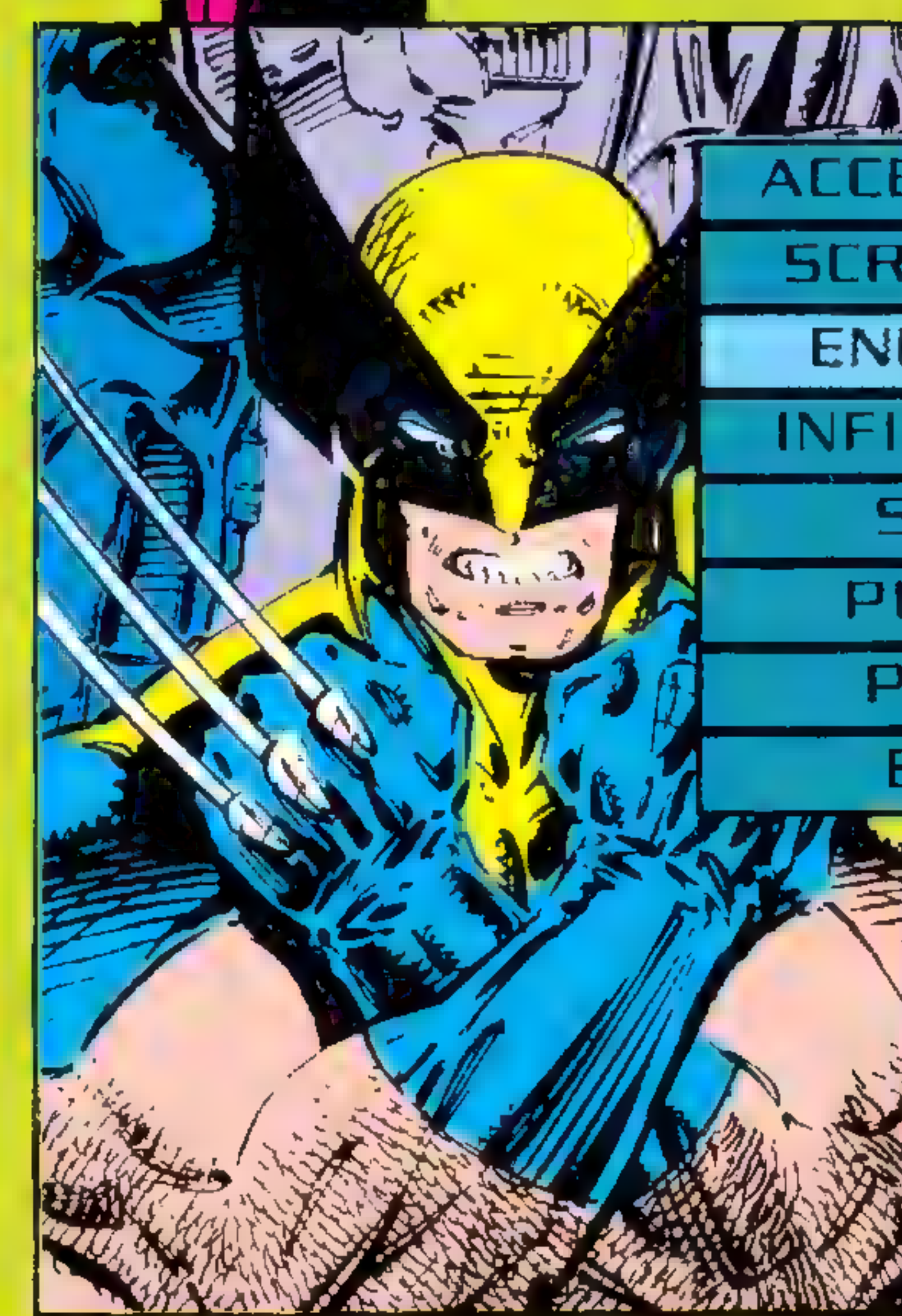
As it stands, they are just minor players in a much larger game, no matter the importance they impart on themselves as pieces in the arena of time.

Let the pawns sniff the rotted wood for maggots. Let them catch the scent. Then they will know the scent they have captured on icy winds is that of their own fear. The smell of their own failures. The smell of their own deaths.



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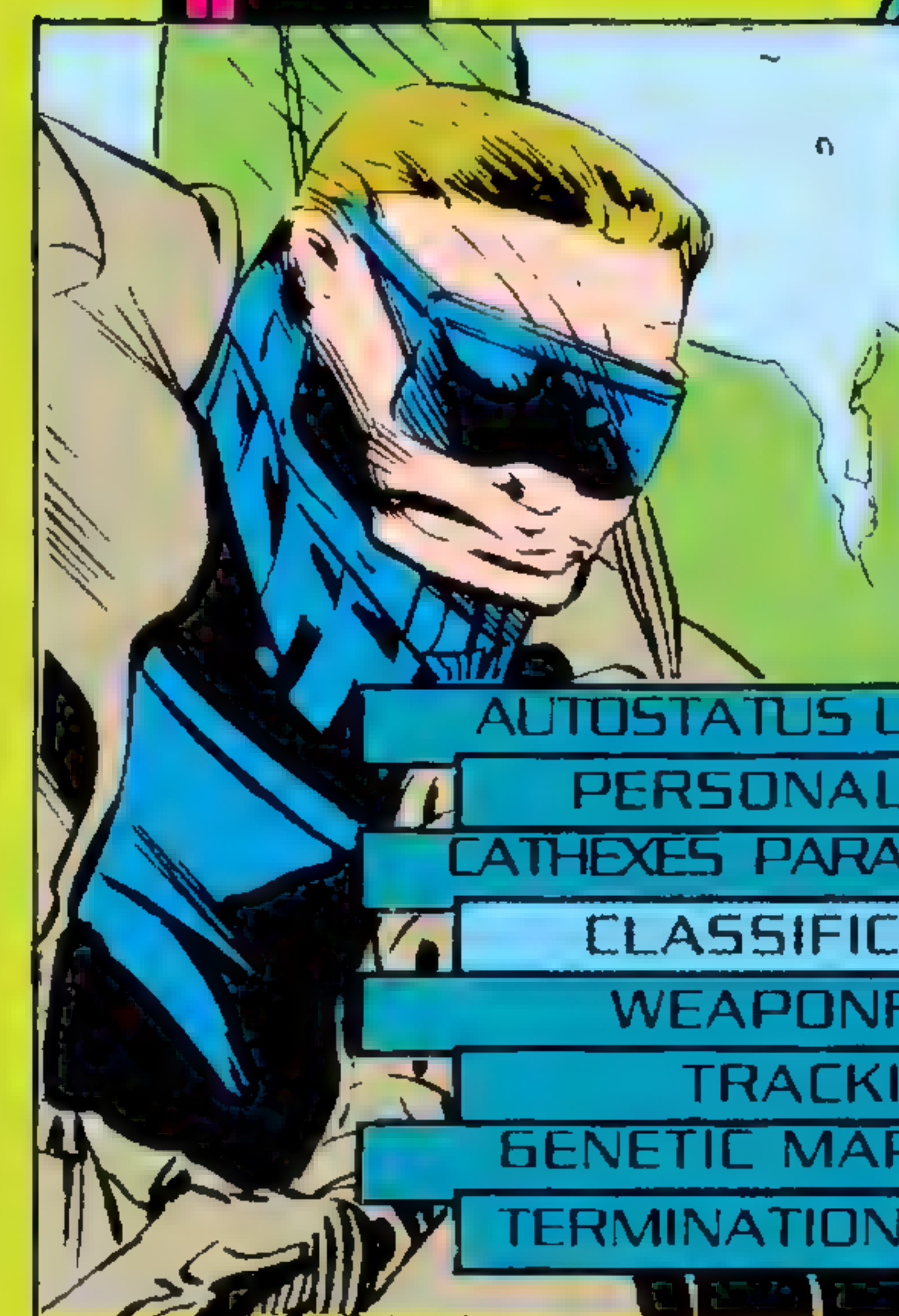
GRAYDON CREED Of the quartet of Upstarts bidding for genetic supremacy, I find this man fascinating, for unbeknownst to his competitors . . . Graydon Creed is not a mutant.

True, there is nothing unique about a human harboring a healthy fear and hatred of homosuperior. Bolivar Trask, Stephen Lang, Peter Gyrich, and to a certain extent Senator Robert Kelly . . . there is a history of would-be oppressors of mutantkind. Creed should be forever observed, and never underestimated, based on his heritage alone.

He is the only living child of the most savage, vicious mutant in all recorded history.

Born into poverty on the streets of a Mississippi river city, young Creed was abandoned and left for dead at an early age. Ironically, the same tooth and claw tactics he despises in his father have served him well in his quest for wealth and power.

While the rest of the Upstarts concentrate on "quality" kills, Creed is content with "quantity" — interested in destroying as many low grade mutants as he can. His greatest ambition is to hold his father's heart in his hand as it beats its last.



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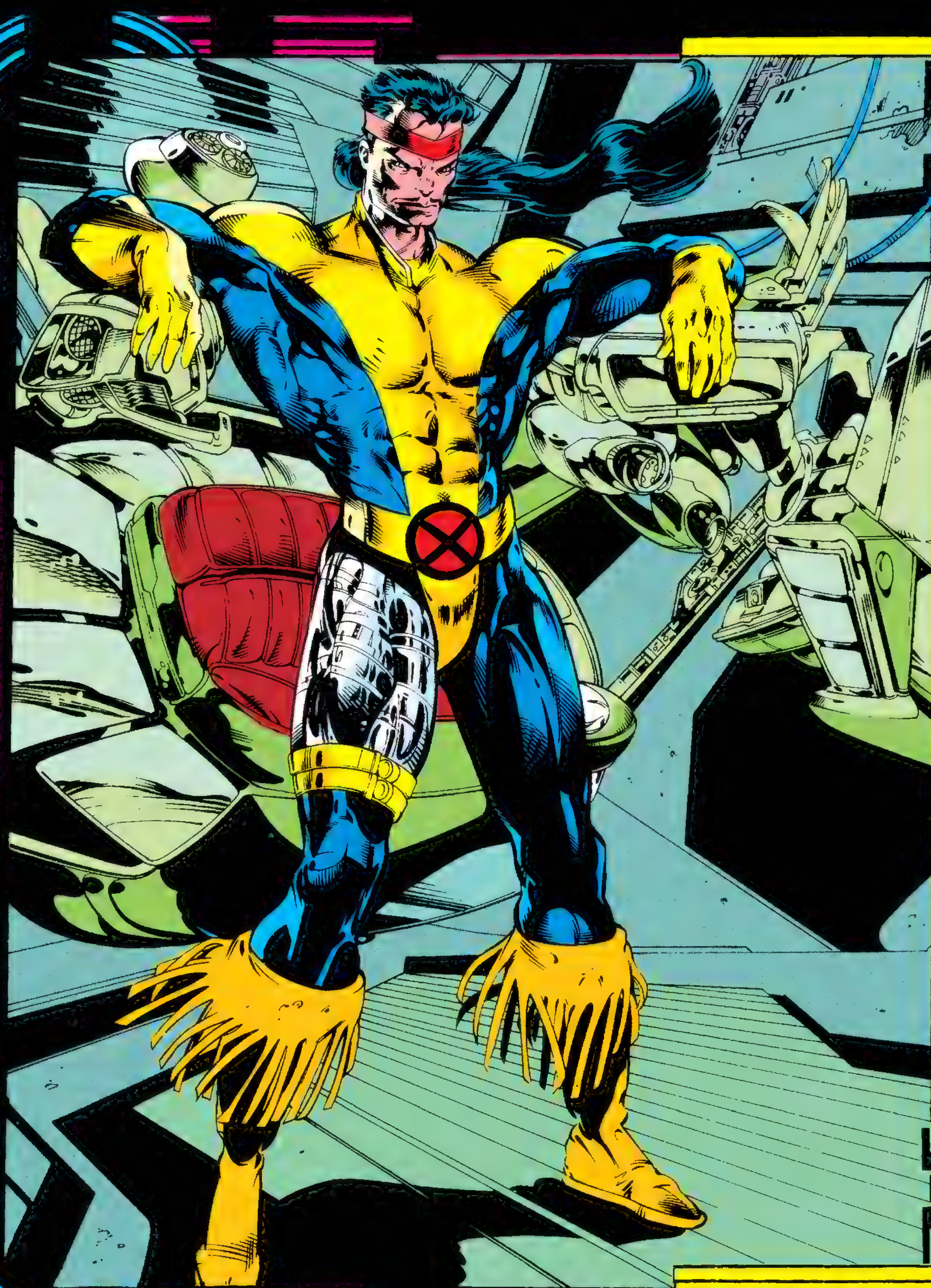
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FORGE Forge is a creator of living organisms without breath, without blood, without bone, but with a miraculous spark of life nonetheless. Forge is an inventor, whose mutant ability to understand and implement mechanical functions to an almost microscopic degree, makes him an ironic candidate for Xavier's dream — which has always been one of heart and soul.

Indeed, the mechanical God-player has always flirted on the fringes of Xavier's playground, never comfortable running with the other children, but always curious enough to watch their every move.

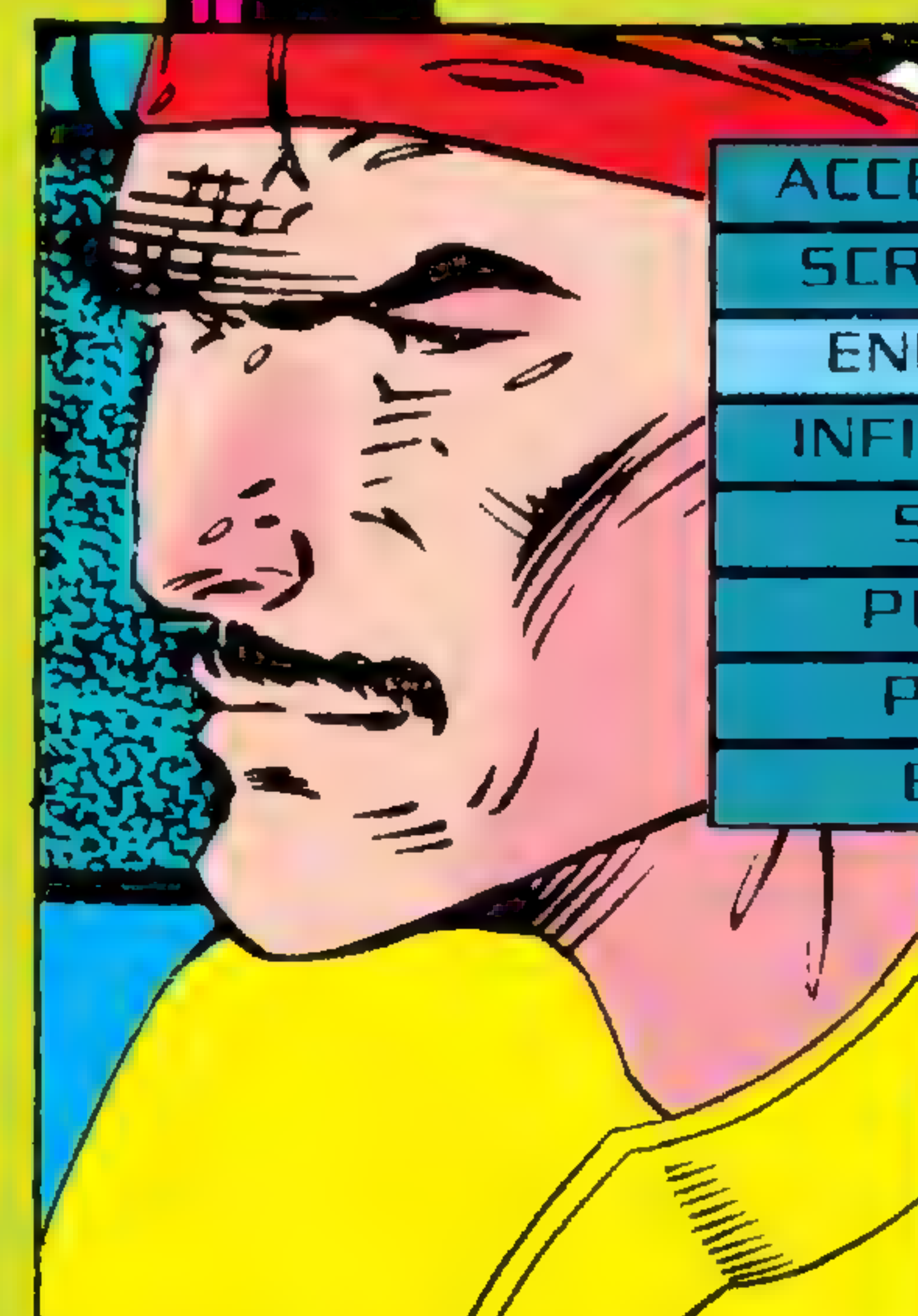
In such consistently contradictory fashion for these children of the atom, Forge's greatest abilities lie in the polar extreme to his physical gifts: the master machinist is best at playing games of wounded emotional turmoil.

What will he do next? What will he do when my legacy consumes them all? When flesh crumbles, when hope fades, what will the mechanical mastermind be able to do with his circuits, steel rods, gears and clockworks? What will machines do when man fails? And what will Forge, who has always been as much machine as man, as conflicted and torn between the two as he is between the dream and the reality — do?



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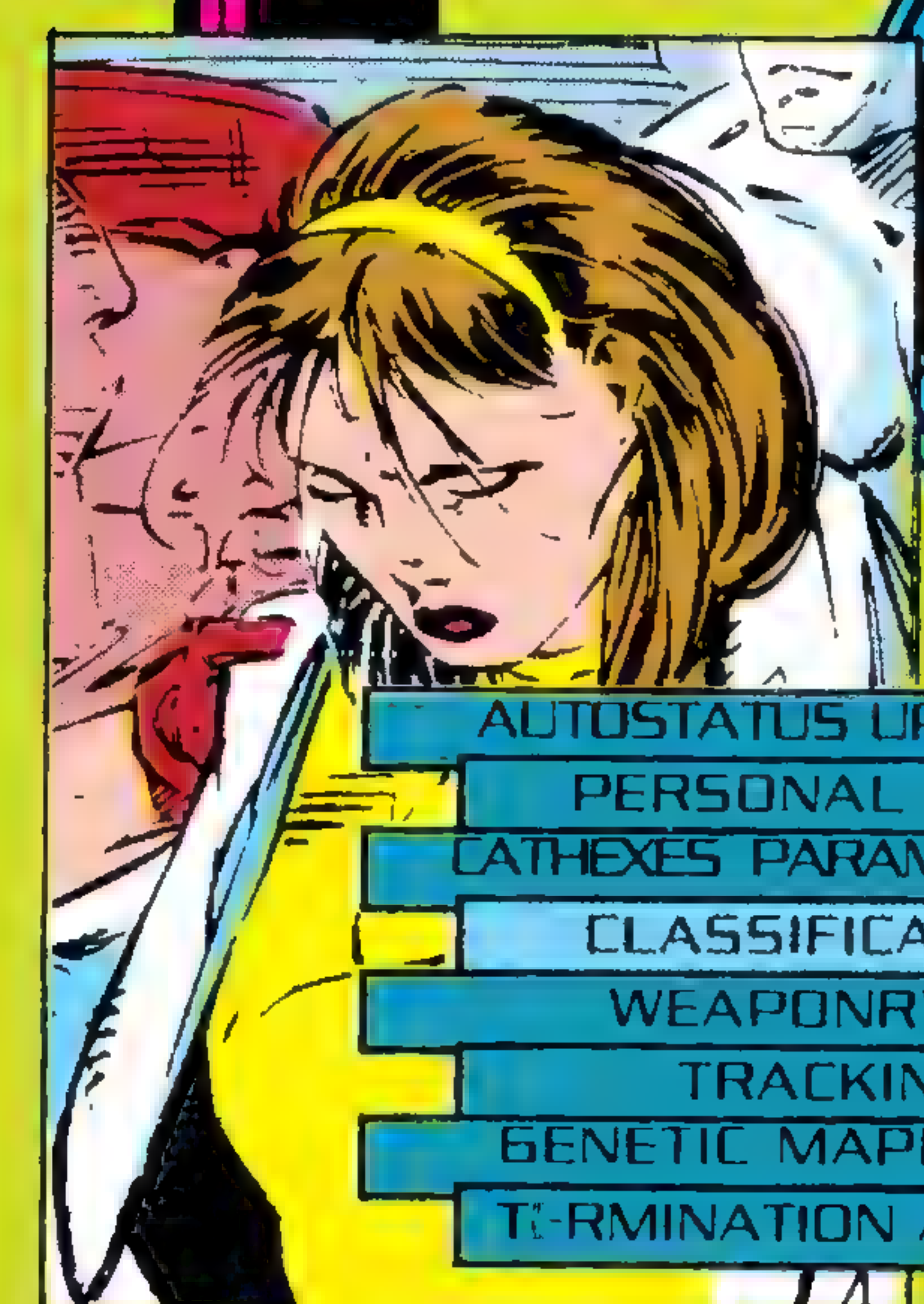


MOIRA MACTAGGERT She plays with the fates of genetics the way a child plays with building blocks. Putting them together, creating something new, piece by piece, with wondrous curiosity and petulance. The geneticist plays the game with all the callousness and indifference of a child. How else to reconcile the deeds she has performed in the name of man and mutantkind?

A poke here and her son Kevin is lost to her forever, a probe there and an infant Magneto is forever scarred.

My legacy is so perfectly fitting for her, of all people, for she will have to come to terms with the storm on the horizon. And as the winds of hatred whip up, as a torrent of misery gushes down, as the skies break open and release my agony on this pathetic planet, Moira MacTaggert will be standing atop a hill, buffeted by the storm, revelling in its primal force.

The irony being, that when mutants will be at their worst — dying from the inside out, Moira MacTaggert will be at her best — poking and prodding, playing with the building blocks of life. . .all in the name of science and saving lives. Will she succeed — or even more appetizing — will she even want to?



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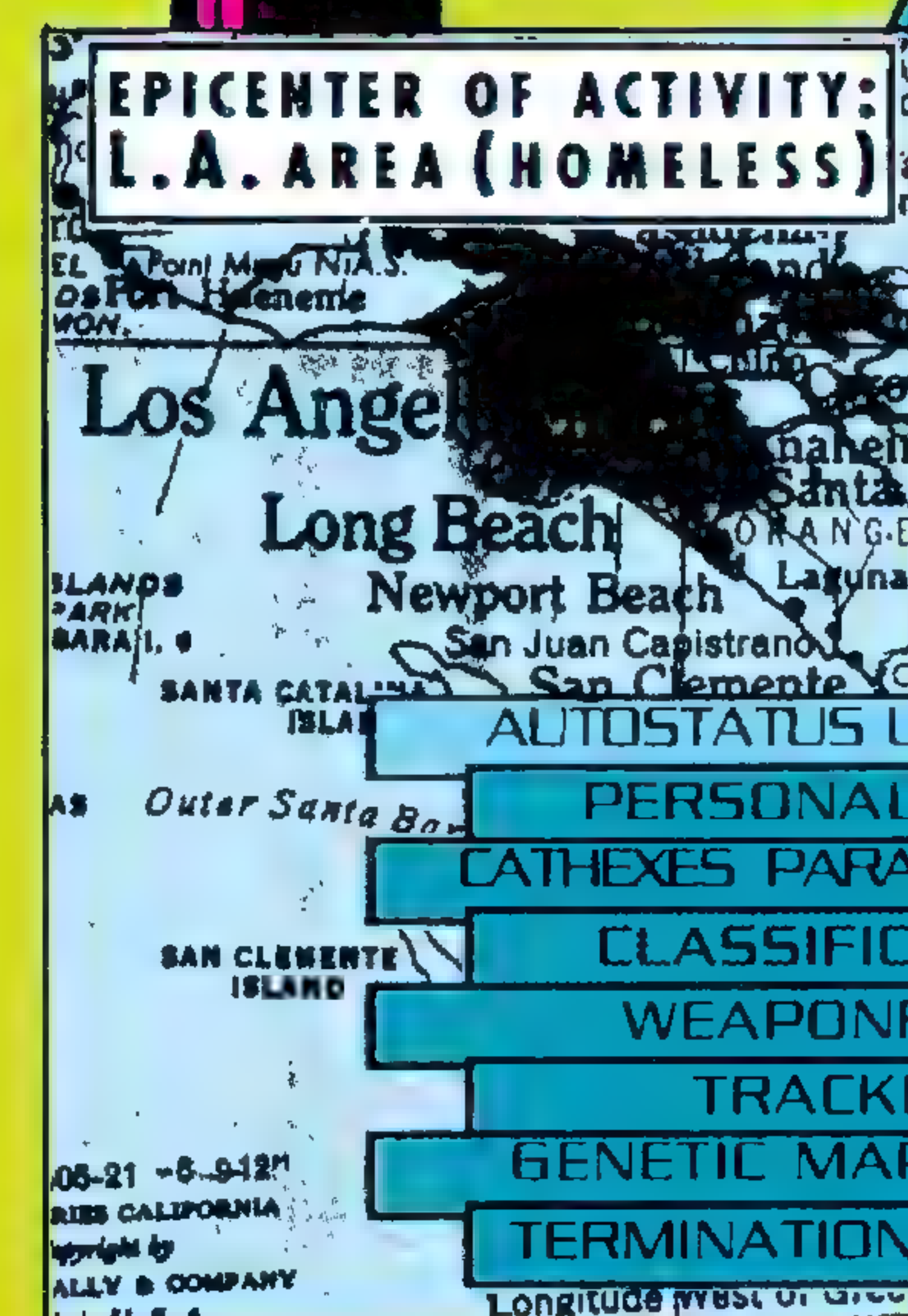


THRENODY She wakes up to the chirping of the birds and hears only a song of mourning. She strides into the daylight sun and sees only the dark cloud before every silver lining. She smells the sizzle of bacon, the aroma of coffee and thinks only of the decay of dead animals and vegetation.

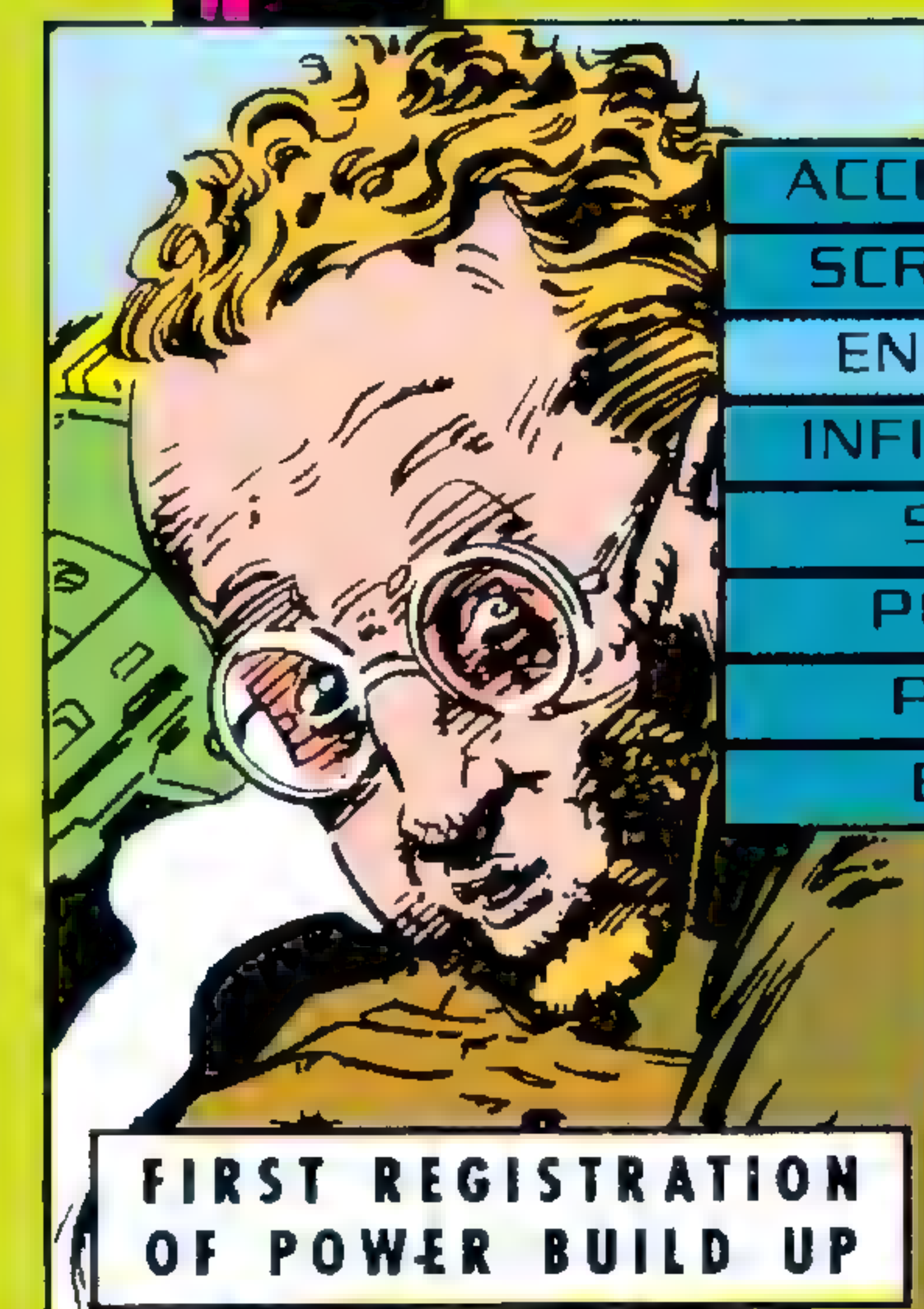
Threnody has sung her song of misery in minor refrains since her childhood was young, but now that she is an adult, her Wagnerian opus — her glorious song of despair — has yet to rock the world.

She begins to sense it, little by little, the coming of the plague — the bell chimes of the dead ringing in her ears. Every day, she draws her knees a little closer to her chest, a soft hot breath of fear whistles through her lips.

And when Threnody is given the chance to sing, the world will hear her shriek—and the world will know my legacy lives on—as mutantkind dies about them...



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SEBASTIAN SHAW /HELLFIRE

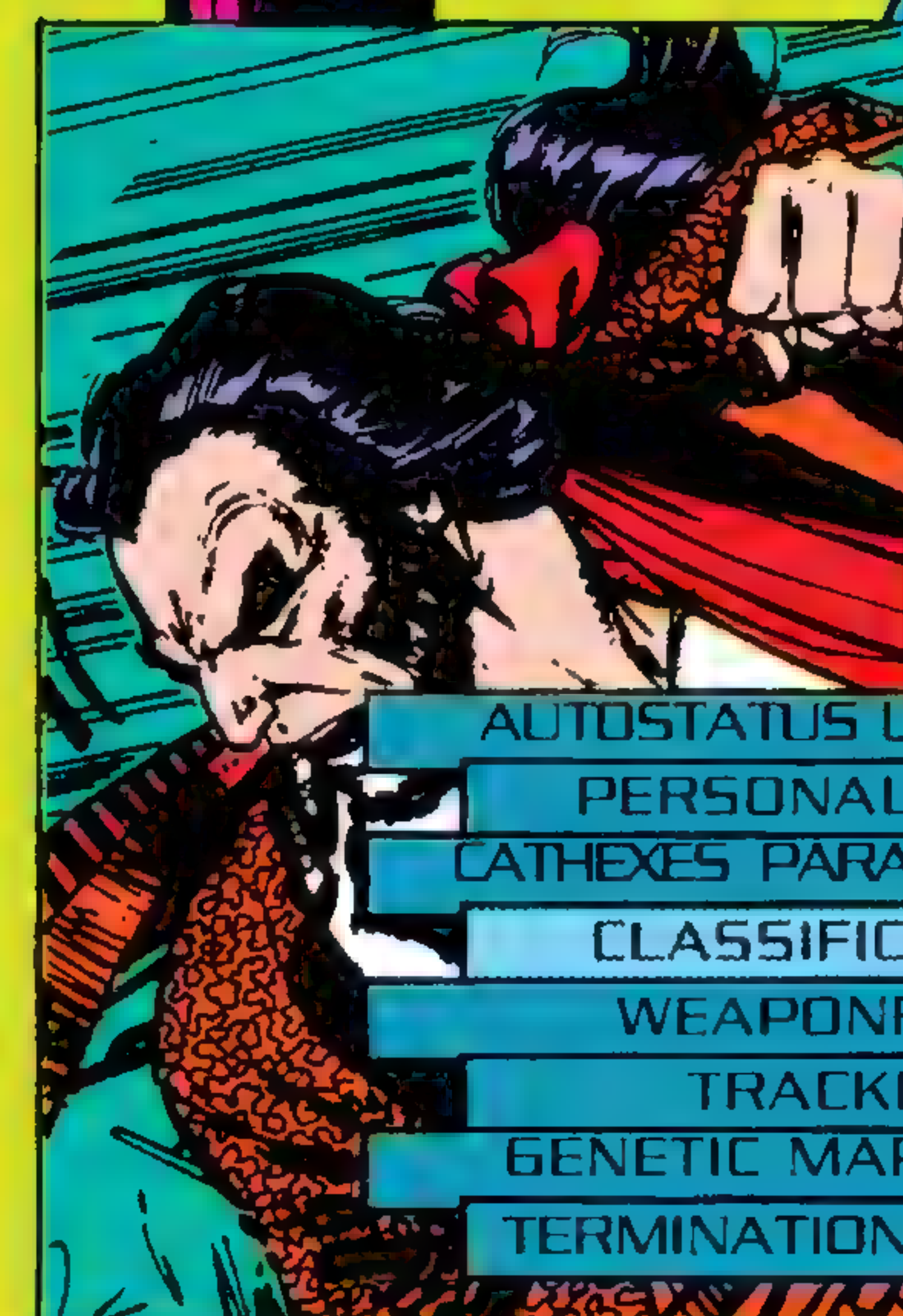
CLUB Dead is dead, as well we all know, in flesh and blood. But dead is a meaningless word in spirit and deed. Sebastian Shaw knew that well. What he inherited, he also left behind — a legacy of power, deceit, manipulation and greed. And the child he bore so recklessly and indifferently, assumed the mantle quite nicely to slay the dragon which was his father and continue the game apace.

What did Sebastian Shaw accomplish then, in his long and illustrious life? He increased the viability and power of the Hellfire Club. Presided over the prospering of this filthy extrapolation of Xavier's dreams — this elite bastion to self-proclaimed superiority, where both mutants and humans intermingled — comfortable in the climate of mutually assured wealth and fame.

And now, with dear Sebastian dead, what becomes of this institution? Presidents publically lamented Shaw's passing and privately hoped the Club would continue without him, but the children of the Club seemed as passionately uninterested in its upkeep as they were vehement in its destruction.

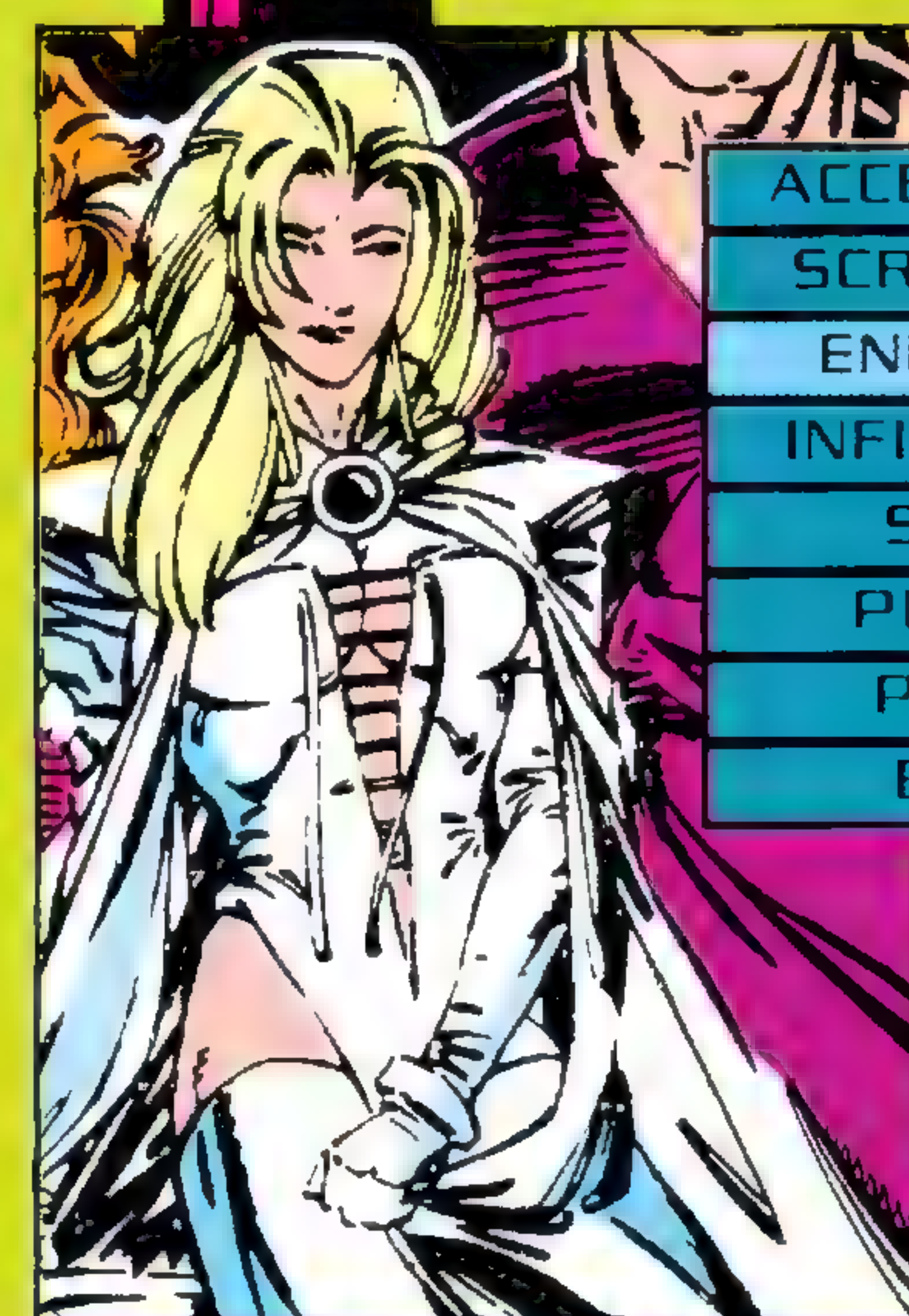
That is what Shaw left then, the end result of swimming a lifetime in shark-infested waters — a gravestone with his name on the marker and an empty tomb inside. Empty of heart and soul, life and passion.

In all, Sebastian Shaw left nothing...



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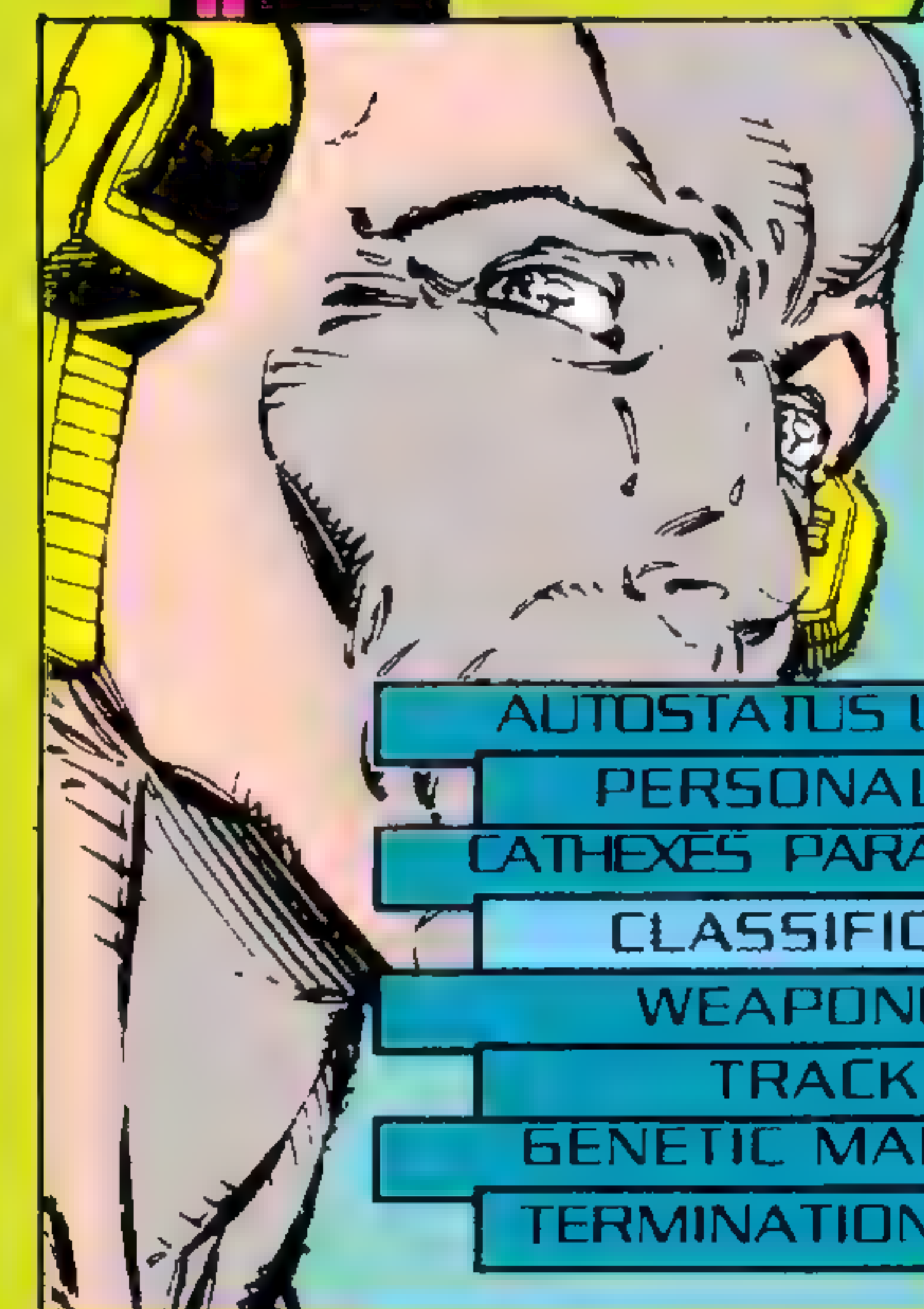
GAMESMASTER Imagine, a million thoughts rampaging through your mind all at once. The fears and hopes, the loves and hates, the agony and the ecstasy of every living being on the face of the planet. . .all competing for your full attention. Twenty-four hours a day. Every day of your life.

The young man known only as the Gamesmaster is an omni-path. For all his power, he is powerless to shut out a single thought. There is no sentient being capable of shielding his thoughts from him. He is equally unable to prevent those thoughts from intruding on his psyche.

His mutant ability is constantly "on."

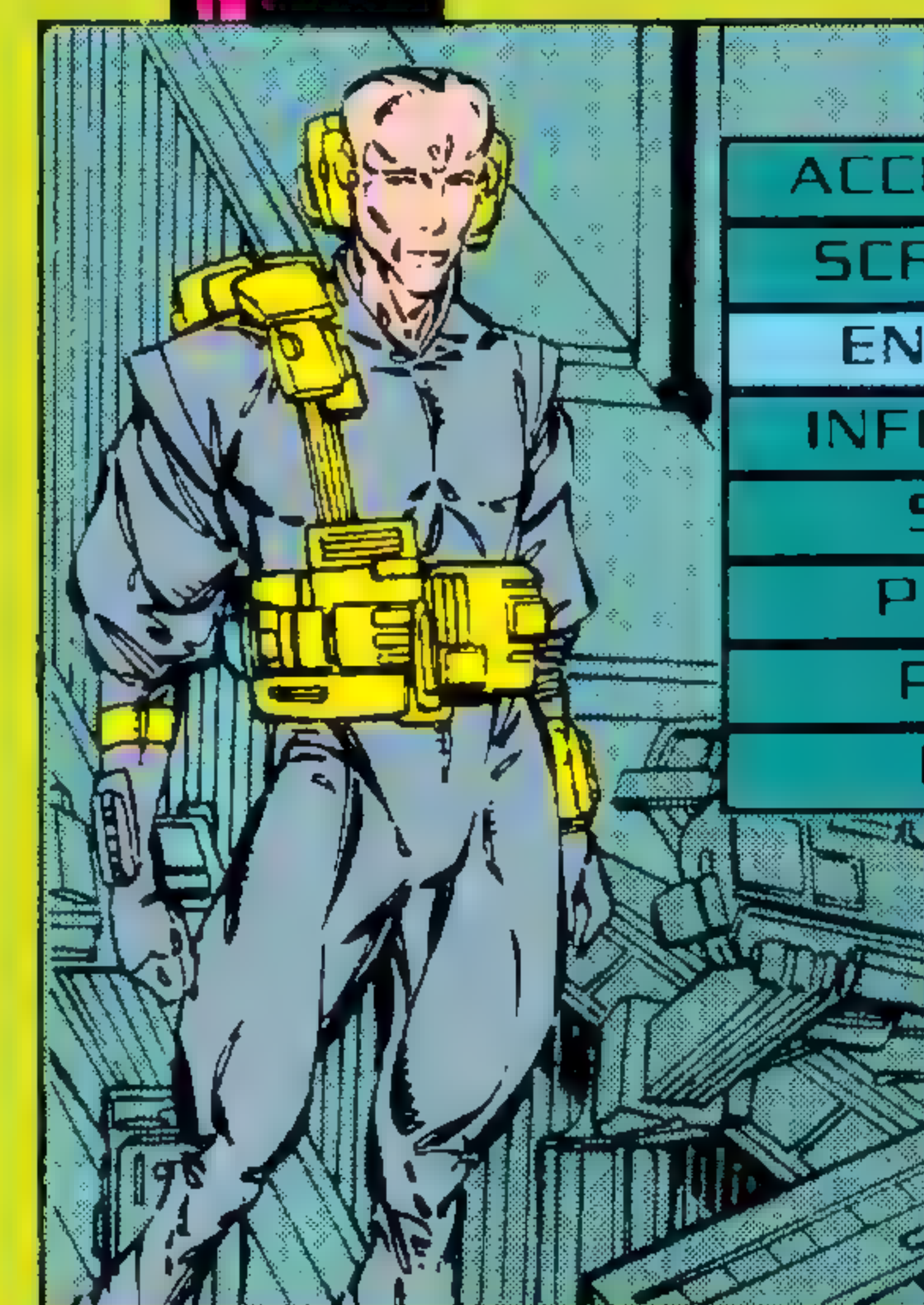
His only respite comes from a most unexpected quarter. So strong are the thoughts and desires of the quartet of power mongers known as the Upstarts, the Gamesmaster has discovered their "competition" provides him with momentary distractions from the mental mosaic forever etched upon every square inch of his mind.

The Gamesmaster acts not out of any grandiose bids for world domination — he acts to preserve his ever-fragile sanity.



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THE UPSTARTS The billionaire boys club that fancies themselves the rightful heirs of mutant leadership. How ironic then that the most deserving of my attention is not a 'boy' at all.

Siena Blaze possesses the singular ability to disrupt the electromagnetic field of the planet earth — making her a walking natural disaster. More frightening is what lies beneath her angry, volatile and self-destructive exterior.

Unlike the rest of the Upstarts, all intent on ruling Mutantkind for their own agenda, this young woman of privilege would no sooner wish to rule an ant hill — so far removed is she from the concepts of Humanity which fuel the ambitions of her competitors. She is dangerous because her self-image is based entirely on her quest for leadership of the Upstarts.

Her power is not without a cost, however, for each time she uses it — she risks not only her own life, but that of every living being on the planet. To most that would serve as an impediment — this woman views the threat of world destruction as a fringe benefit of her mutant birthright.

Too unstable to easily control — unlike, in many ways the Upstarts themselves — Siena Blaze is an unwanted variable in the fruition of my legacy.



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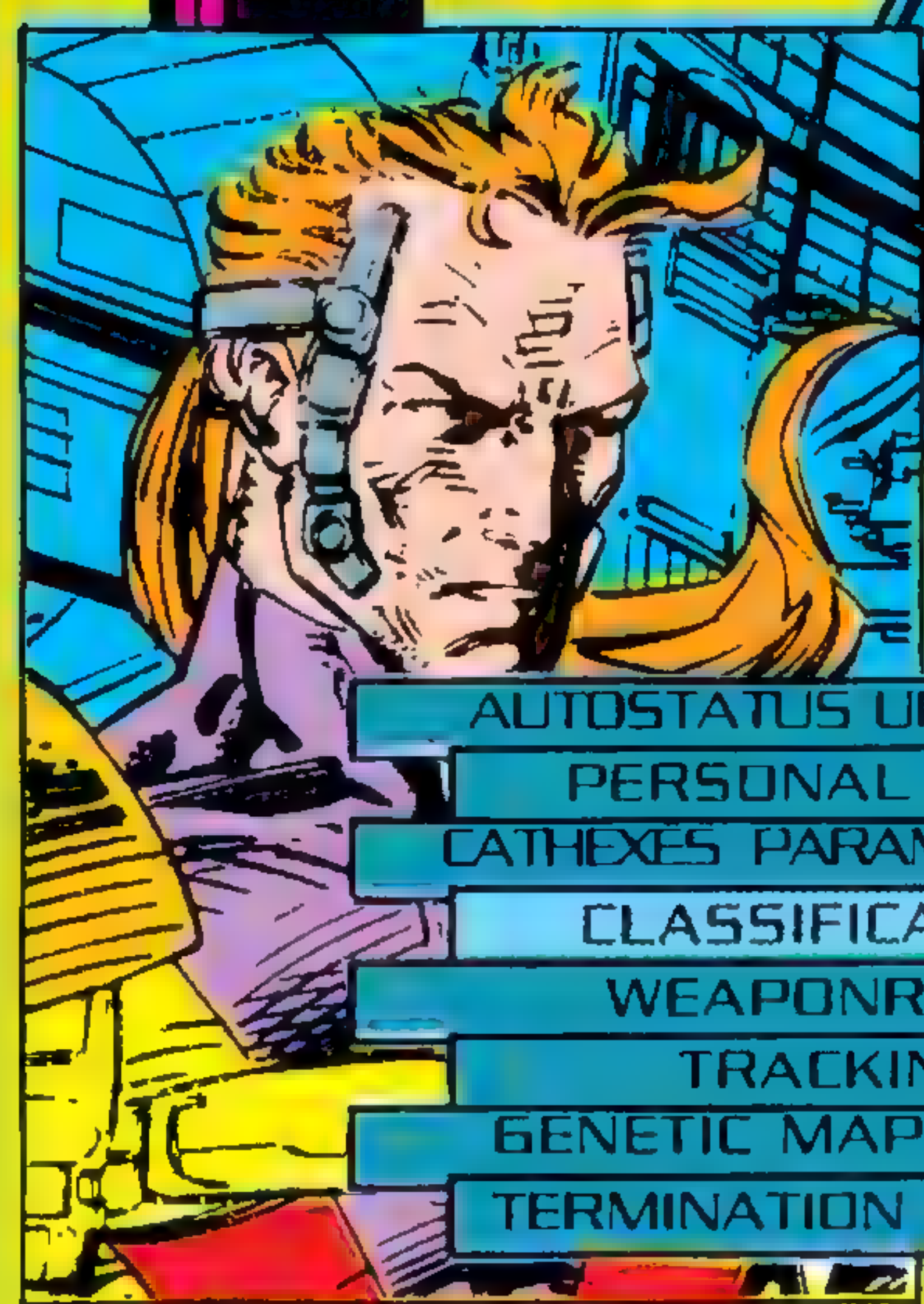
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FABIAN CORTEZ has become a never-ending source of fascination, as has the frequency with which a mutant's personality is reflected by his power. Nowhere is that more clearly defined than in the persona of Fabian Cortez. The man's ability to exponentially increase the powers of other mutants is symbiotic in nature — his personality hinges on the need to manipulate those others to accomplish his goals.

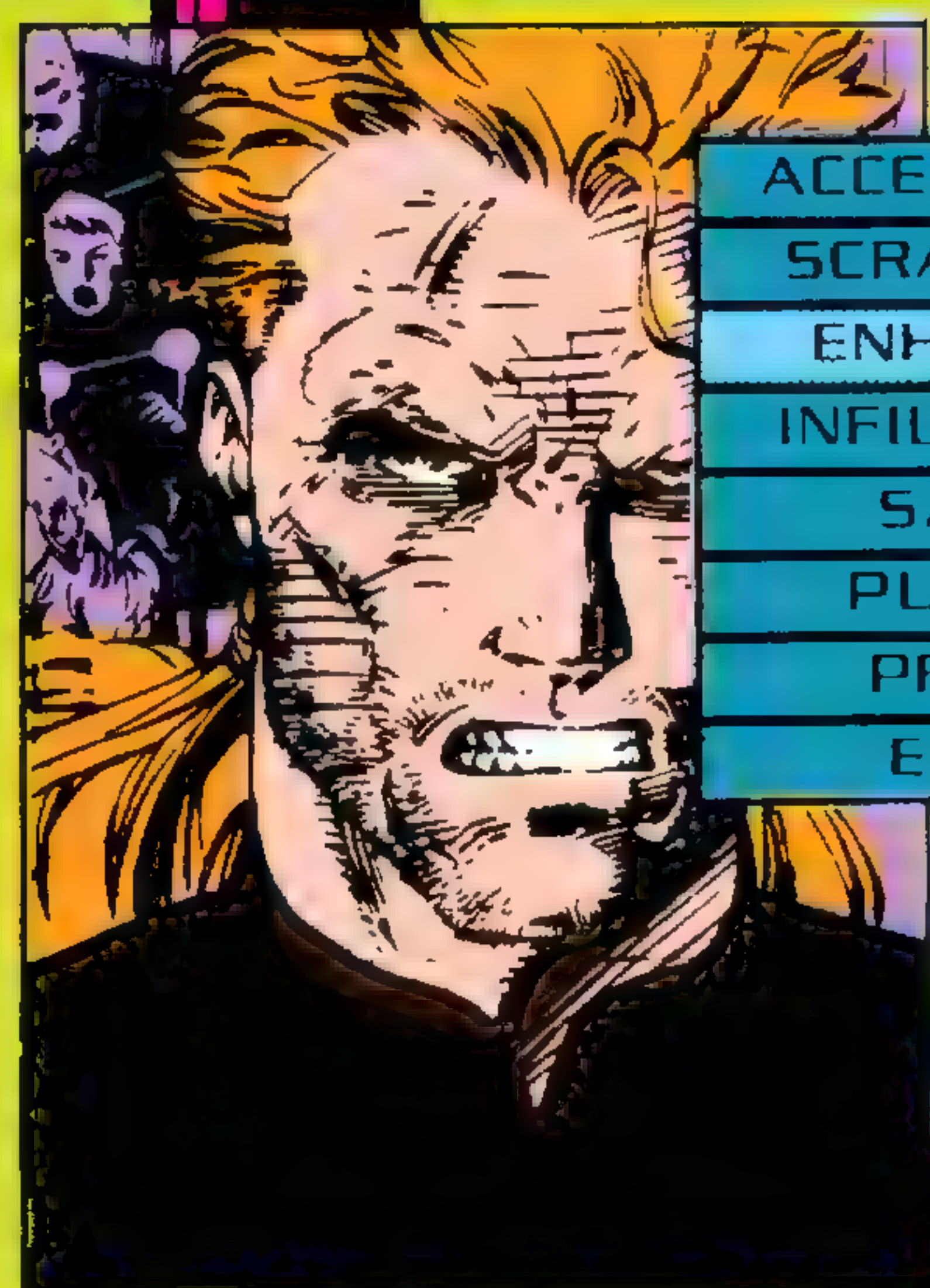
Being born royalty, heir to a financial fortune beyond reckoning, was apparently not enough for this ambitious young mutant. Currently the undisputed leader of the Acolytes after the supposed death of their Messiah, Magneto (a passing he had more to do with than they suspect), this role serves solely as a means to accomplish his higher goal of ruling the Upstarts—the self-appointed class elite of Mutantkind.

Yes, Cortez knows much about ambition, greed and avarice. The time is near that he learns the lesson of humility...



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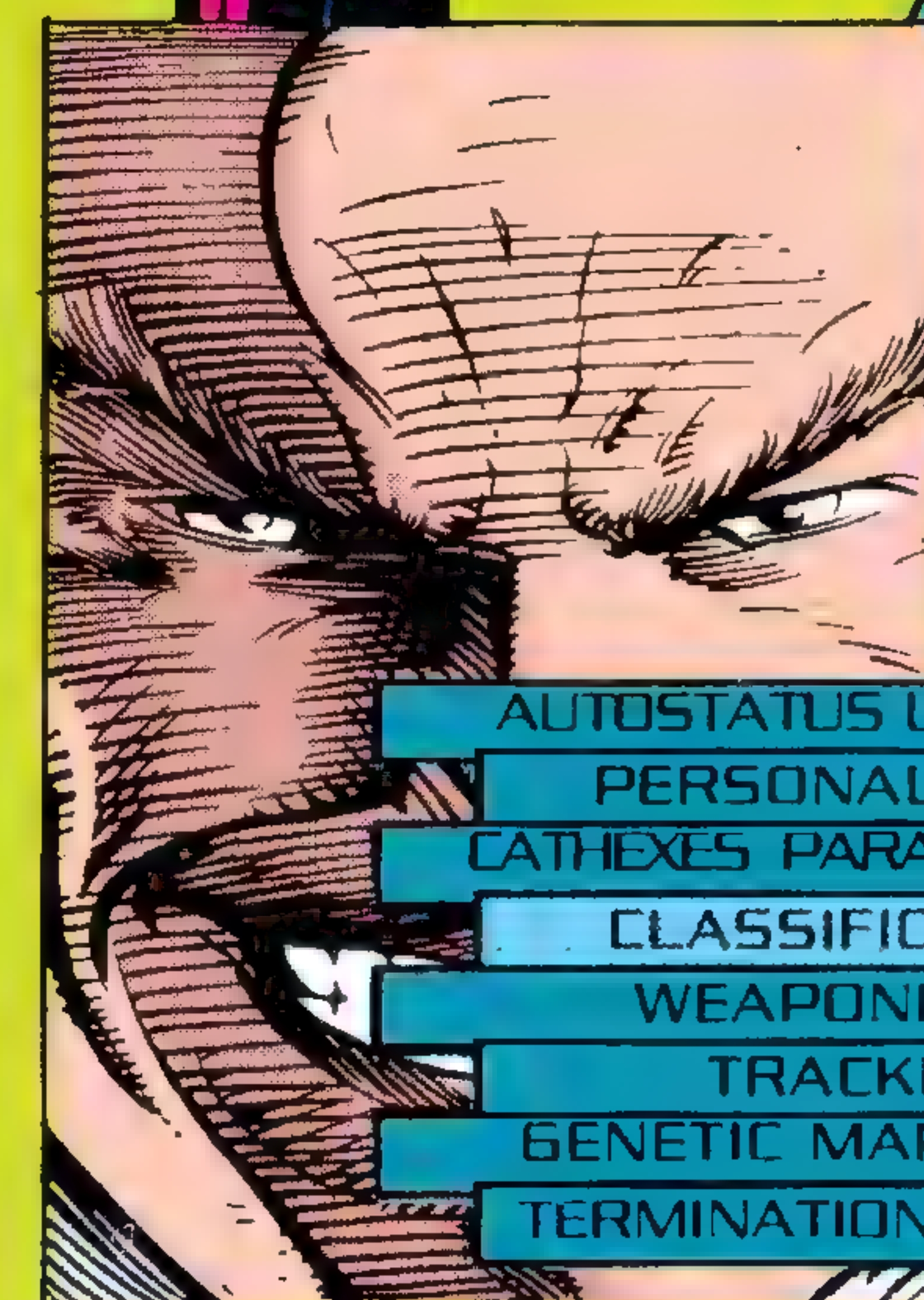


GIDEON A pawn was moved in 1492. A bishop slid diagonally across the board in 1776. A rook pulled the trigger in 1963. The chess game goes on and on. It is a game of immortals, where Gideon is never bored by the eternal machinations.

He is known throughout the world as a gaudy businessman, the "Ziggy Stardust" of the corporate boardroom. He is known to a mere handful as a powerful mutant, whose very power is to use someone's paragenetic abilities against him. And he is known to merely ten fingers or so, on the hand of destiny which envelops this planet, as a High Lord. An External. A mutant immortal who has manipulated the course of history to suit his needs for countless centuries.

What is the purpose of their game? They seek power, wealth, the ascension to a self-perceived throne of achievement. They play the game against each other and the world. Will there ever be a winner? A different one for every potential timeline which exists. In mine, it was the Egyptian, in another, who could say?

In this timeline, who shall claim victory? In many ways, I shall indirectly determine the outcome through the legacy I leave them. In this timeline, maybe *none* of them shall emerge victorious — because, with even a smattering of luck on my side — there shall be none left alive to win!



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MUTANT LIBERATION FRONT

What does a general say to his troops when he knows they are being led on a suicide mission? How does his conscience twist and turn in the darkness of the night, the bedsheets soaked in guilt and uncertainty?

I have gathered this unit from the corners of the Earth, coerced, cajoled and connived to have them believe in a cause which meant nothing to me.

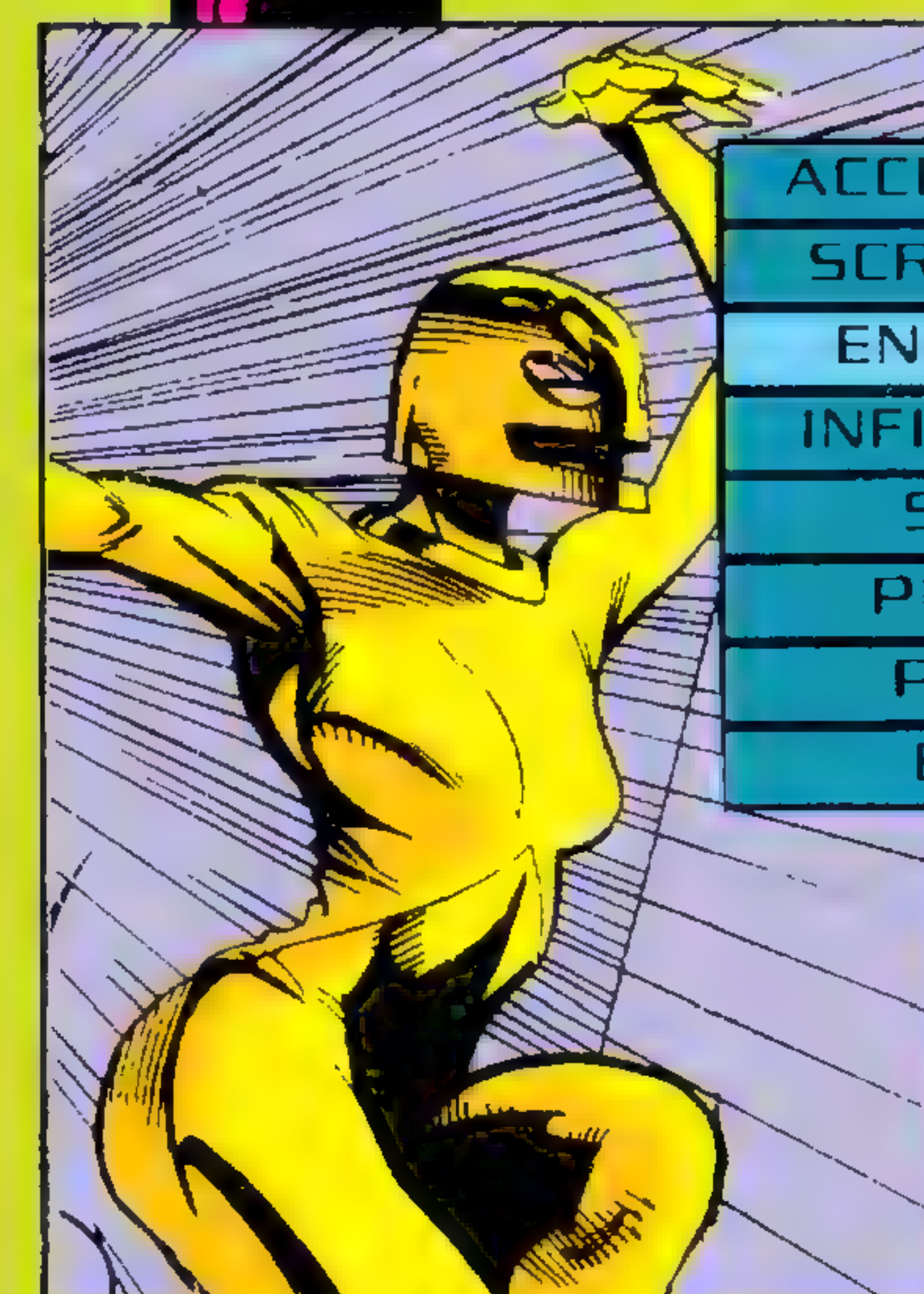
Now I watch them march to their deaths — or worse — the crushing of their fighting spirit.

It bothers me. . .if only for a moment . . .but time has a way of blanketing all wounds in its soothing embrace. And in time. . .I won't care. . .



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CANNONBALL The farm boy who would be King. The least likely to seek the mantle of savior is the one now forced to do so. Samuel Guthrie was not born into royalty, but died into it instead.

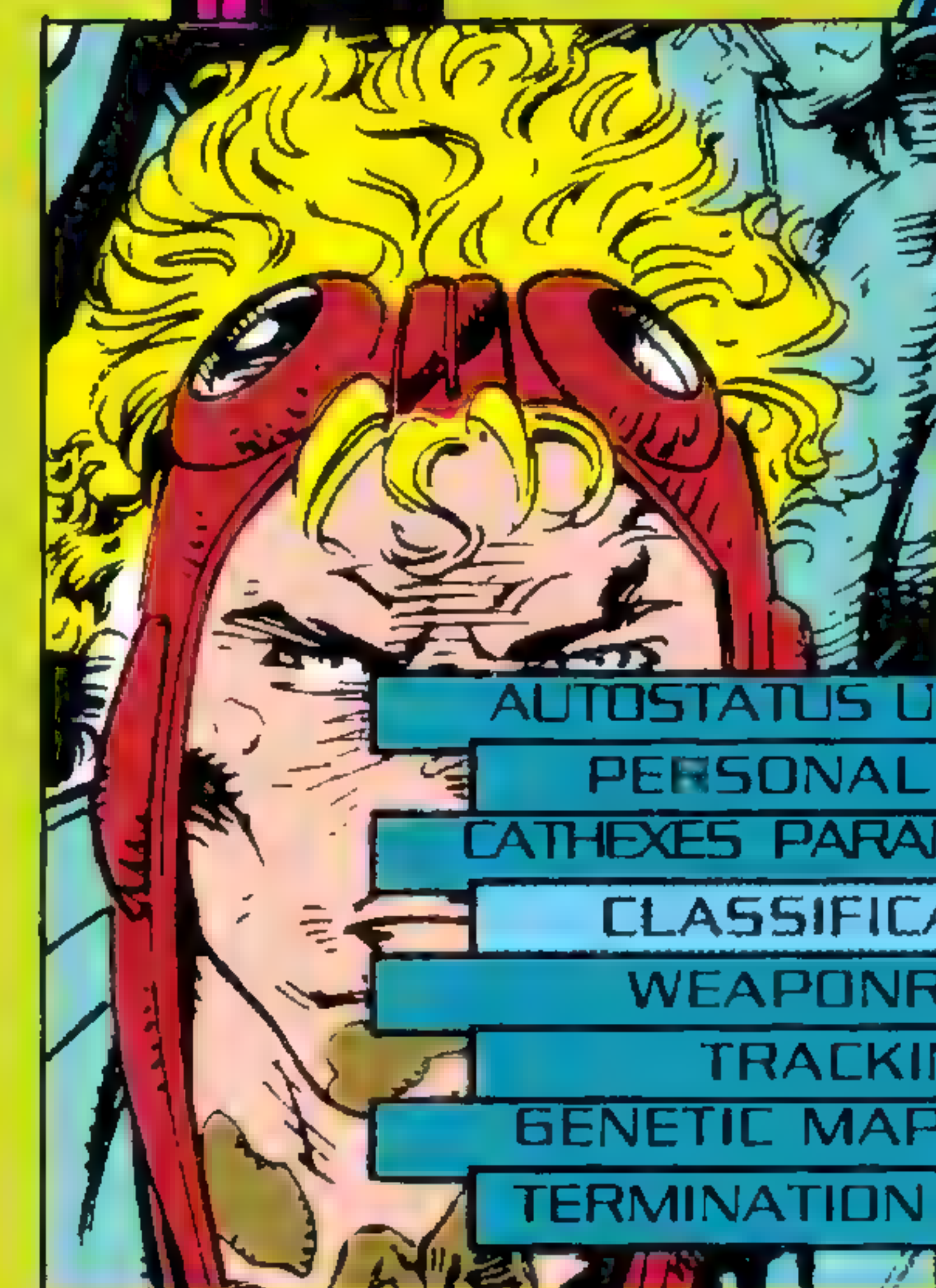
Cannonball is an External. The boy High Lord. A mutant immortal whose immortality was only recently awakened when he was killed by the lizard-man, Sauron. As such, Sam will never die, though he most assuredly can be killed.

How will this child handle this taxing burden? To know he will outlive his friends and family, to know he may be responsible for the safety of mutants for generations to come?

As few might expect, he has assumed the mantle of leadership over Cable's ragamuffin band of renegades with not the slightest of hesitancy. The one who was always the least secure about his mutant abilities and had the least control over them, is now in charge of tomorrow's genetic-nuclear arsenal.

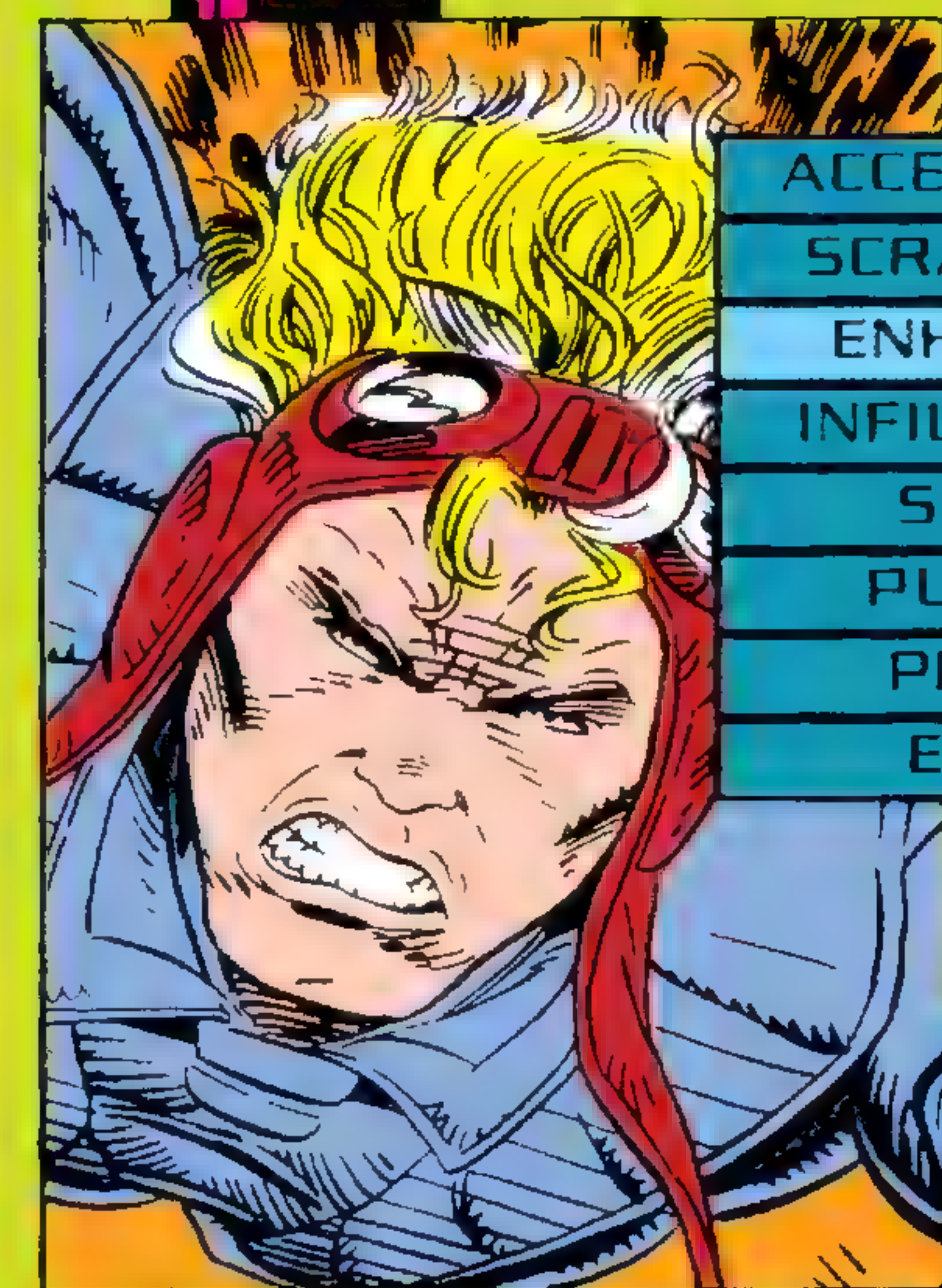
It should not come as much of a surprise, for after all, the child has grown from adolescence into adulthood under the tutelage of two men's dreams — Charles Xavier and Nathan Dayspring Askani'son — the former a preacher of the open hand, the latter of the closed fist.

From these extremes, from these seemingly contradictory teachings, comes a mutant who may accomplish what *both* his "fathers" sought to do — establish a world where man- and mutant-kind can live together — by eradicating those who would harm them.



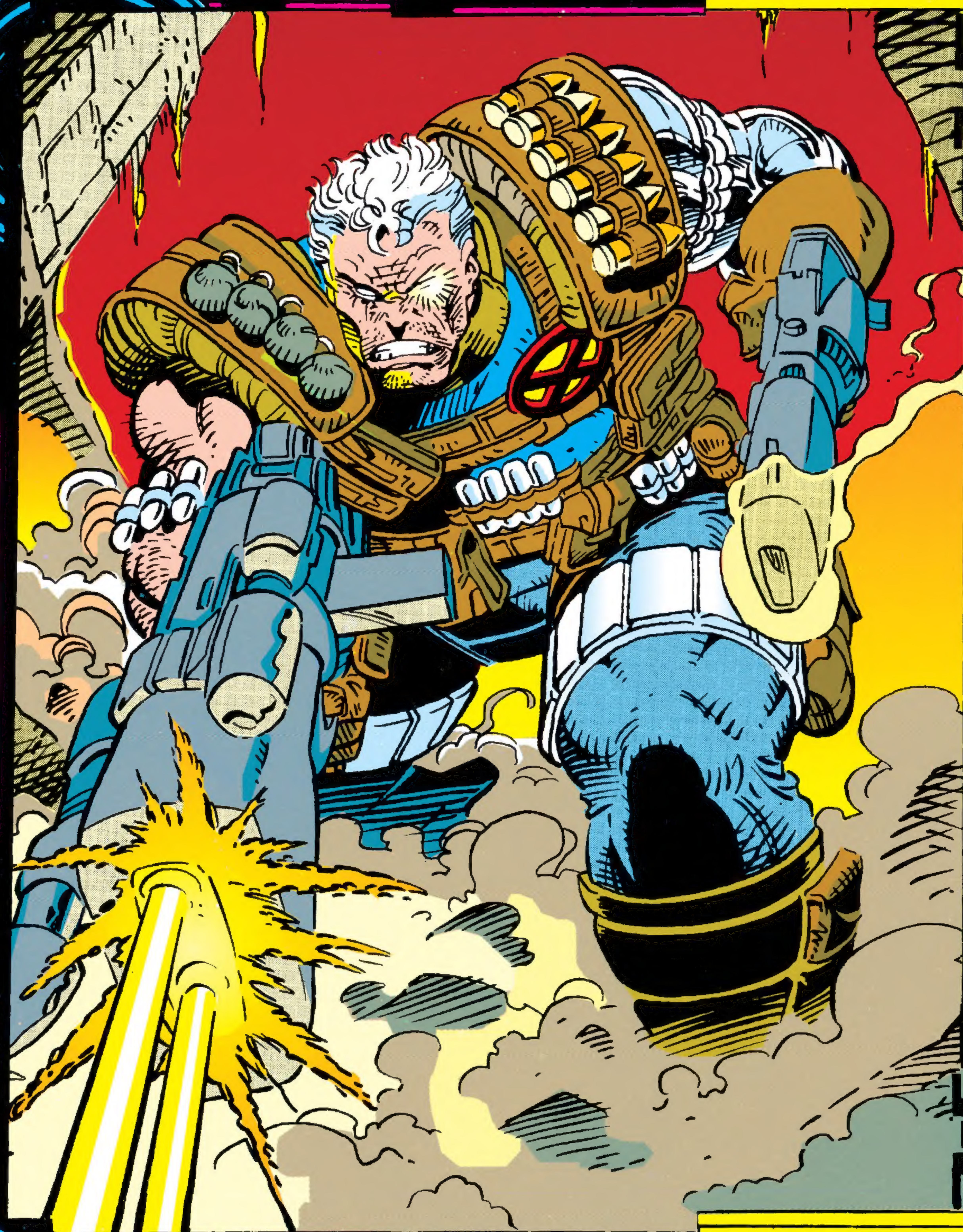
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CABLE Play the game with me one last time, mirror-friend.

Run through time with me in race against the repetition of sins we've endured and caused over and over again.

See my reflection, mirror-foe, look at your face staring at you with scars carved in pain and hopelessness.

Sneer as the glint of metal catches your eye and ask yourself what you are fighting for. Humanity? Mutants? Tomorrow? Today? All illusions, as you of all people know. There is nothing to be gained by fighting. Your future is past. Your past is immutable.

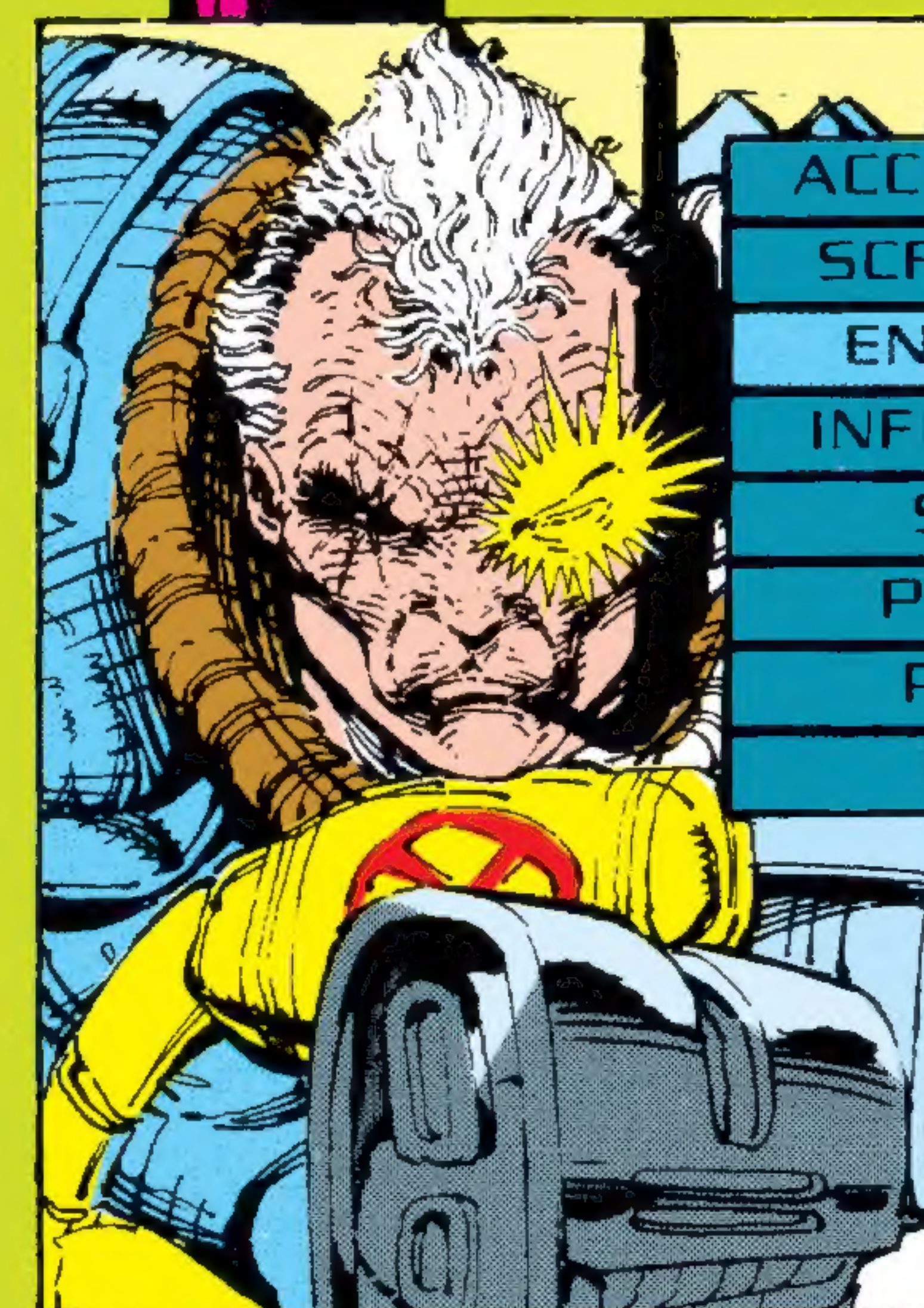
There is only hatred to fuel us. Hatred to consume us. Hatred to engulf us.

Walk in the fire with me, Nathan. Let us burn together.



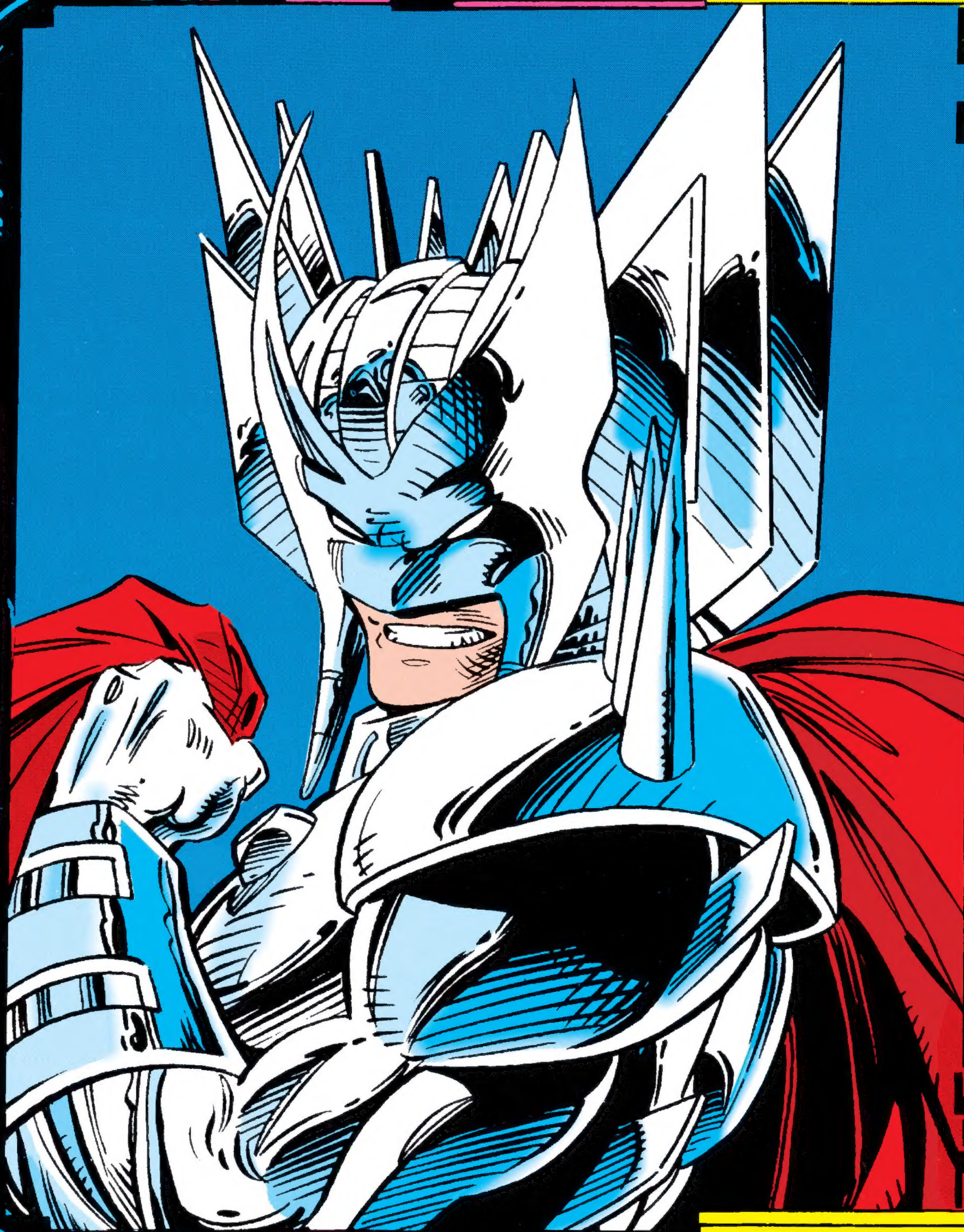
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STRYFE The final move. White king against black king. Yet here, nothing but grey reigns supreme. Shades of grey, of uncertainty, insecurity, confusion, anger, love and hate.

Shades of me.

Shades of you.

Shades of them.

Let the final moves be made.

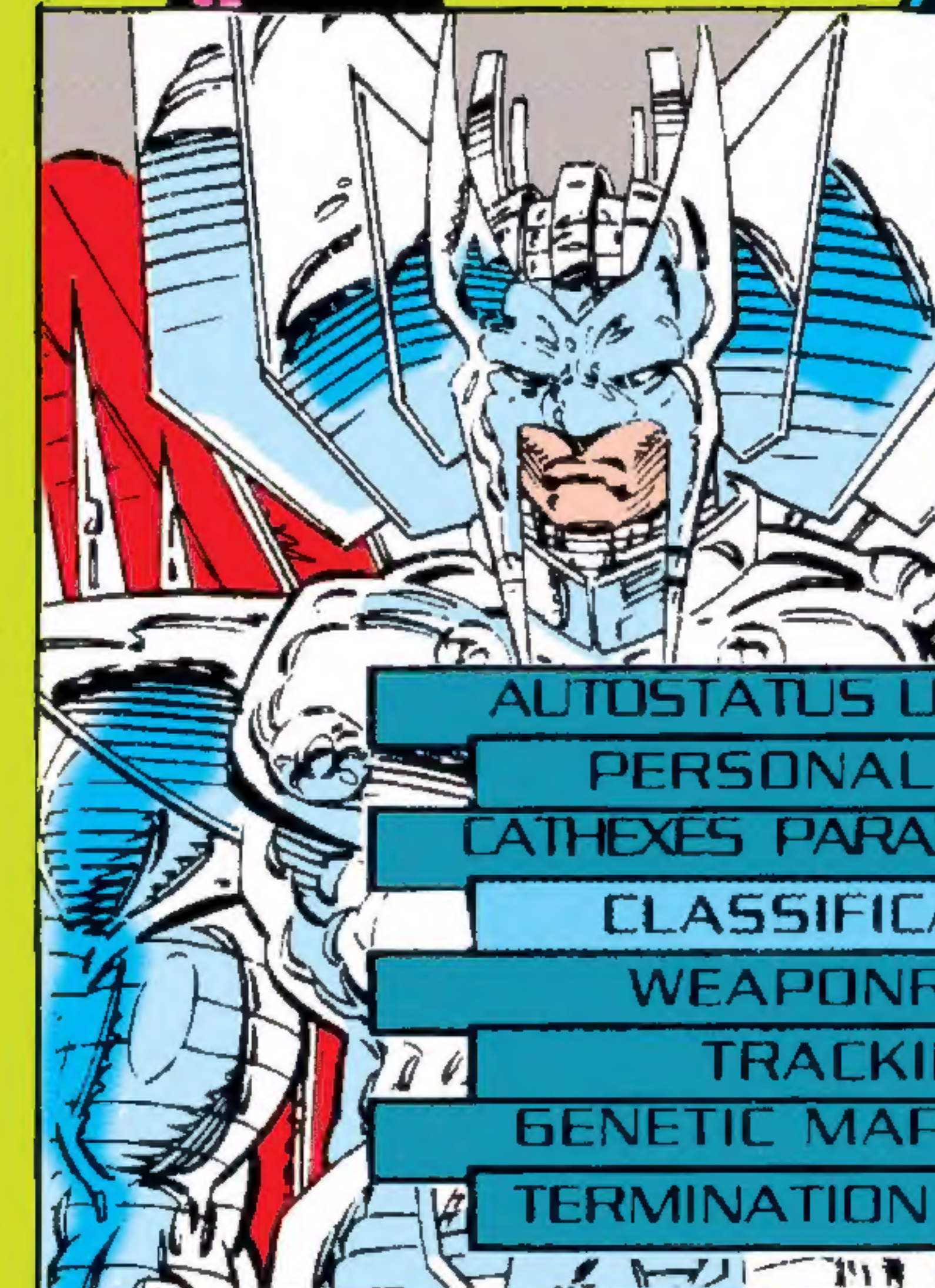
Let time determine the righteousness of my path.

I did it for only two reasons.

I did it because I hate you all.

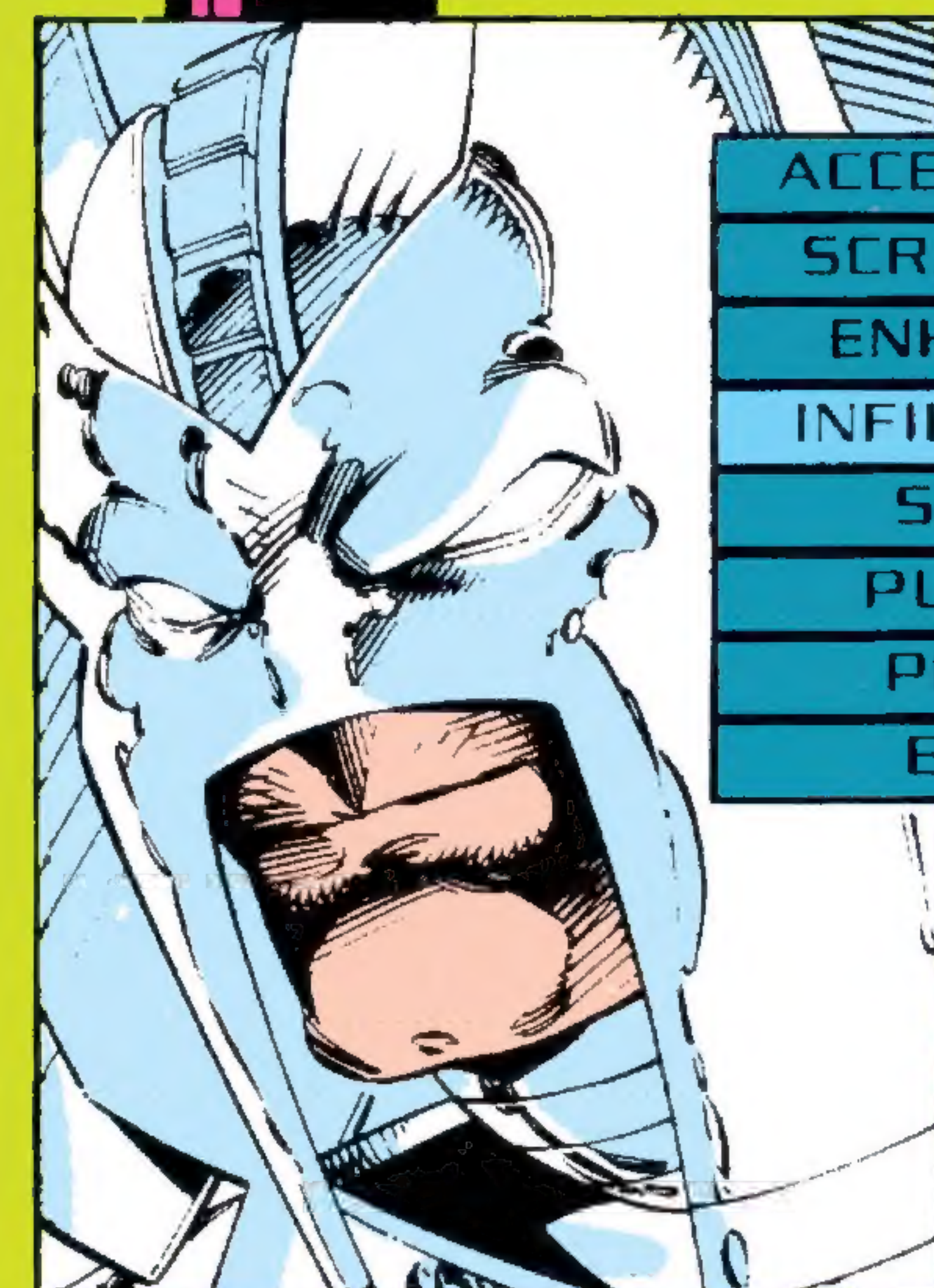
And I did it, ultimately, because I hate myself. . .

. . .tomorrow, I will know if I was right or wrong. . .



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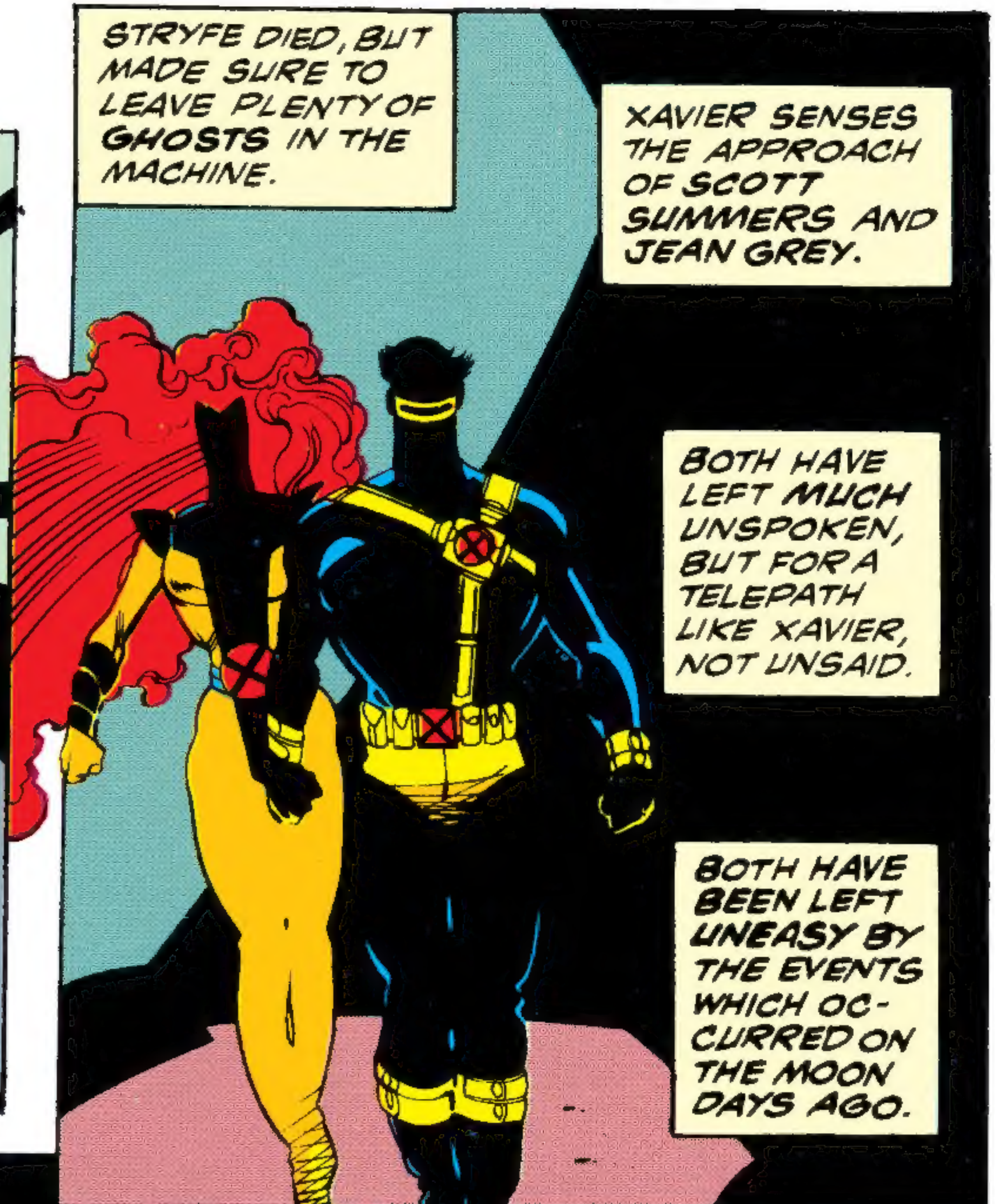
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THE HARD-DRIVE SYSTEM WHIRRS ALONG QUIETLY--

--TOO QUIETLY, FOR XAVIER CAN HEAR THE GEARS SHIFTING INSIDE HIS OWN MIND.

SCHEMES AND PLANS, MACHINATIONS AND DESIGNS...



STRYFE DIED, BUT MADE SURE TO LEAVE PLENTY OF GHOSTS IN THE MACHINE.

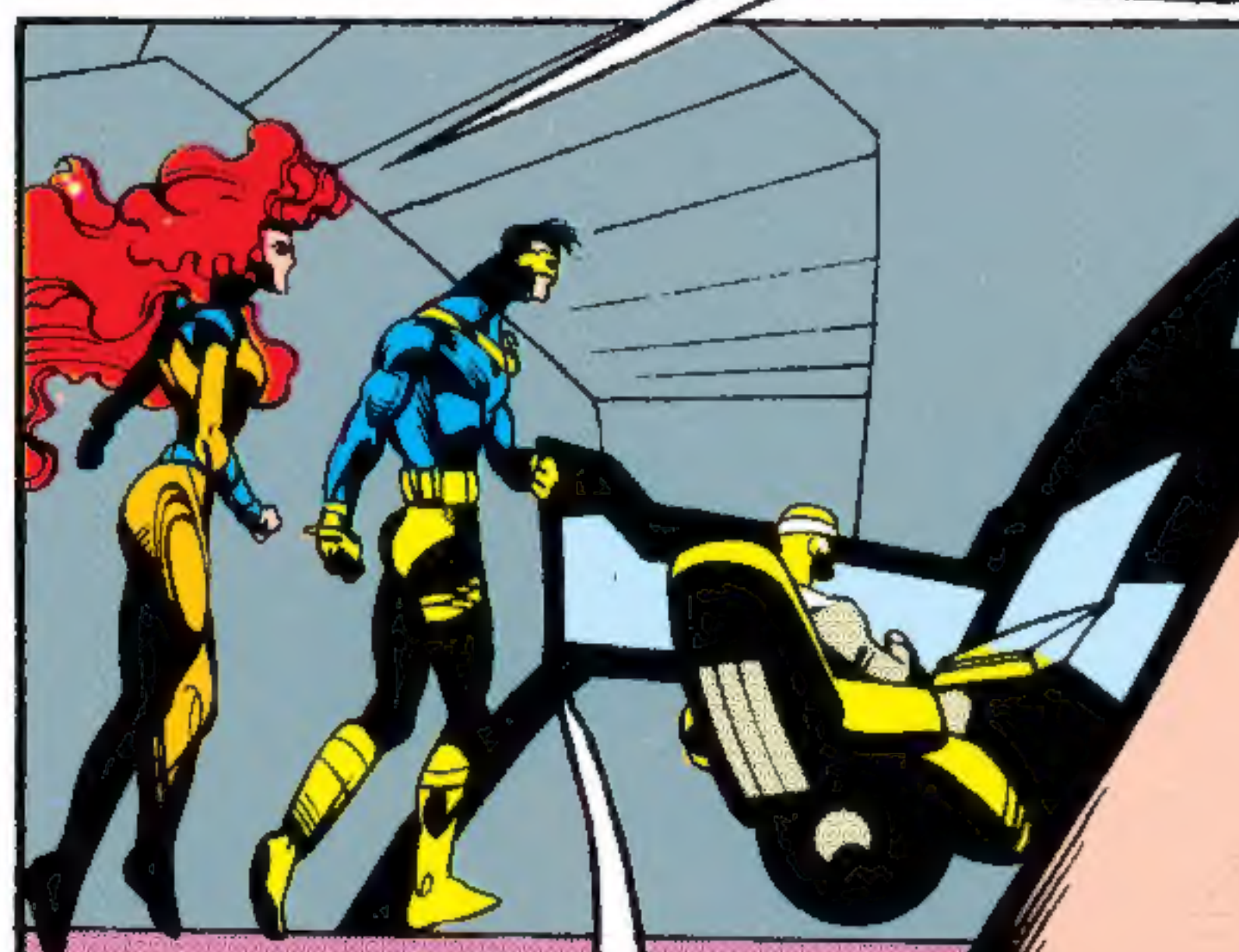
XAVIER SENSES THE APPROACH OF SCOTT SUMMERS AND JEAN GREY.

BOTH HAVE LEFT MUCH UNSPOKEN, BUT FOR A TELEPATH LIKE XAVIER, NOT UNSAID.

BOTH HAVE BEEN LEFT UNEASY BY THE EVENTS WHICH OCCURRED ON THE MOON DAYS AGO.



SHOULD HE GRANT THEM ACCESS TO THIS FILE? WOULD IT MAKE THINGS BETTER FOR THEM IF THEY KNEW THIS INFORMATION-- OR WORSE?



IS THERE ANYTHING WE CAN GET YOU, PROFESSOR?

NO, SCOTT-- JEAN-- THANK YOU...

... I'M FINE...

... FOR NOW...

PURGE FILE COMMAND ACTIVATED.

Do you wish to continue PURGE function?

Erasing Diskette
Purge File Activated

Diskette Erased
Purge File Completed

CHARLES-- IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?

THE SOUND OF THE LEAVES FADE, THE WHIRRING OF THE MACHINE DIES DOWN, THE DRUMBEATS OF XAVIER'S NERVOUS HEART CONTINUE...

A STACCATO DRUMBEAT, A RHYTHMIC POUNDING OF TENSION-- THE EXECUTIONER'S SONG IS OVER--

--AND XAVIER HEARS A NEW, DARKER SONG BEGIN...

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